

# A SEQUENCE IN HEARTS



MARY MOSS

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**A SEQUENCE IN HEARTS**



# A SEQUENCE IN HEARTS

*By*

MARY MOSS



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## I

### Marian Genge

"**I**N photographing most people, the trouble is to dodge their worst angles. Even freaks and vegetables can be softened a little, but with you it's just the other way round, Marian," Romola West scolded, aggressively. "Every pose is so good that I don't know which to settle on. You bewilder me!"

"*I bewilder you!*" Marian Genge's deep voice and delicately deliberate utterance expressed a gently ironic doubt.

"Don't be stupid! Of course, there is nothing complex in *you*. You are as simple as a stricken deer. It's your legs I'm talking about!"

Marian cast an inquiring glance downward. "Aren't they rather simple, too? They seem to do well enough." Her face

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showed considerable amusement as she went on : " We never know ourselves ; but really I don't quite see myself as a stricken deer."

" Do well enough ? I should think they did. How many girls do you suppose there are who could sit up in this studio rigged out in that costume and even vaguely suggest the real thing ?"

" The real thing ! What am I really like —Cherubino or Siebel ?"

The unintelligent nature of this question brought Romola, fiercely haranguing, to the middle of her studio, a small, tintless figure, whose fiery explosiveness seemed grotesquely at variance with her neutral coloring and insignificant outlines. " Siebel or Cherubino ! Fat German women in tight clothes ! You look like the page who carolled unseen, or any other anomalous, romantic creature, but always an unlucky one. Such picturesque possibility as you have ! It amounts to a gift, an absurd gift ; and what earthly use is it to you or to anybody ? Put trailing white draperies on you, and with a trick of the eyebrow, a smile or a frown, you'd do for Iphigenia or Medea.



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You are thinner than the Sphinx ; but that wouldn't prevent your looking like her if you'd a mind to try. With your perfectly commonplace forebears, I can't see where the type ever came from. Hébert painted it, in those Spanish-Italian women of his, straight-haired, with oval faces and greenish-hazel eyes. Not very good women ! Then there are warm tints in that brown skin of yours——”

“Not very good ?” Marian remonstrated. “I'm as good as the next person.”

“Yes, you are not bad,—not yet, that is. At present you are only wastefully picturesque.” Romola stood staring intently at the charming figure in doublet and hose, till even Marian felt a twinge of self-consciousness, and, easily shifting her position, began softly strumming on a large, new mandolin.

This promptly gave occasion for a fresh outburst. “There you go again ! A better pose than the last ! What have you done, how have you earned it, to be so supremely graceful ? Then the sin of your keeping all that joy of plastic beauty out of common circulation !”

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Marian laughed outright, not an exuberant laugh, but full of underlying mirth and tenderness. "But, Romola dear, could I go about so? Wouldn't the police do something?"

"Don't talk nonsense," Romola grumbled. She had gone back to her tripod and was making sudden dives under the heavy black cloth, giving an odd effect of some sharp little animal scurrying into its lair. The studio was large; sketches crowded each other upon walls and easels, bold studies in charcoal, children's heads drawn with unexpected sympathy and feeling, flaming posters advertising everything from an historical novel to a new freckle powder. "Don't you see why it irritates me?" The little painter offered a hint of apology. "Here it all ends. Being a lady, you can't regularly turn model, except to oblige me once in a way; and you are too everlastingly unambitious for the stage."

"Why should I want to be ambitious?" Life came to Marian as a simple matter, and she failed to see the need for all this weary effort.

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Her question, however, impressed Romola as striking deep. Abandoning the camera, she walked thoughtfully about the studio, straightening a picture, smoothing a rug, till her active brain had seized and interpreted the true significance of Marian's attitude. "I suppose that is the whole thing," she finally observed, perching herself uncomfortably on a high stool. "A person of your kind doesn't have to be ambitious. But if you were in my place,—looked like a hole in the ground, with a mean voice and a face no one ever remembered for two minutes——"

"Oh, Romola, that's all nonsense!" Marian grew uneasy at this relentless analysis. The uncovering of a naked human soul in cold blood seemed to her hardly decent.

"Yes." Romola was not to be stopped. "You have the air of a love-child, while I look as if my parents had married for moral worth. My sort, unless they can learn to do something and do it well, are just flattened out, effaced. There is no intention, nobody means to be unkind,—it naturally happens. But you! No one ever forgot you. They needn't necessarily admire you; may

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think you only a long, sallow thing; ugly even. Any sensible man would see the danger-signals out all over you. You're emotional, you've temperament. You create atmosphere. You can potter away your whole time in the country reading a little poetry—not even new poetry—and playing to young men in the dusk. And what do you play? Not ragtime or Wagner, but Chopin! I sometimes suspect you even read De Musset. Any other girl would be utterly swamped by having to live in that old house miles and miles from nowhere. Most people would be ignored, obliterated. For you the whole place is just a wonderful background. The river, the mill, and that overgrown garden where you trail about like the Blessed Damozel and teach your young men to know rosemary from heart's-ease. Your personality prevents your ever being side-tracked, and that's why you can be content to do nothing and let life shape itself."

"I've found it all pleasant enough so far." Marian was fairly driven to a hint of self-assertion.

"Yes, but wait. Nature, stupid as she is,



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is that, Adela?" Her voice was remote in its utter concentration. "Does this downward line clear the curve of her cheek?"

Adela Mallard fixed mild, pale eyes on Marian. "Wonderful! Simply wonderful! Don't change it by the fraction of an inch," she gasped, with returning breath. "Rosalind or Viola?"

"Menden's Troubadour Mandolins, Grade A. The Blondel. Heroic scale poster in color for large hoardings, reducible to black and white, magazine size," snapped Romola. "And I do wish, Adela, you would stick to your miniatures and not suggest things. It confuses me,—you have so little discrimination. Rosalind! A fair-skinned Saxon with a lucky expression, and Viola was made for pure comedy." Her dull-colored head again vanished under the black cloth. She pressed the bulb and quickly withdrew a plate. "That's enough for to-day." Romola was neatly folding the cloth. "When they are developed I'll decide on a pose for painting. Now I must go straight into the dark-room."

Miss Mallard had begun to read her note, but when Romola was well out of ear-shot,

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she laid it down, and placidly asked, "Anything special gone wrong to-day?"

Marian pondered a minute, then offered: "Tired, do you think; too much work?"

Adela shook her faded head sagely. "Not work,—that agrees with her; it must be something else. Do you remember Angelo? Oh! I recollect, you were hardly in town that winter. The little Italian she had for Baby's Best Bath-Brush. Romola won't own up to liking children. She insists it's her diabolical intelligence that enables her to understand them so; but while that boy was at the hospital and the day of his funeral she was just like—like this." Adela could think of no comparison stronger than Romola's present state of tension. "I do wonder what it is now; but she's so reserved, she never tells me anything."

"Neuralgia, perhaps. I wish I could wait and see." Marian was really sympathetic, both with Romola's hidden woes and Adela's evident dread of the temper by which they were made manifest. "But I must go back and read my mail. It hadn't been forwarded from home when I left my aunt's this morn-

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ing; besides, your little lady will be coming for her sitting."

"Not to-day." Adela glanced at the open note. "That's what she wrote to say, and—— Oh, dear! Dear me! She's engaged to be married! that sweet, innocent rosebud of a child! How wonderful!" Adela turned a moistened glance towards the unfinished miniature on the easel. "Now I shall have to retouch this entirely. There will be a fresh expression, and new depths in those unawakened eyes." Sentiment fairly radiated from her as she continued to read out, in a hushed and reverent voice: "He is the very nicest person you can possibly imagine, though he has such a funny name. Do you think I'll ever feel like myself when people call me Mrs. Killian Orth?" Killian Orth! Why, that's the man Romola made a pastel of last winter. *Do* you know him—*is* he worthy of her?" Adela spoke with all a spinster's mistrust of the sex and a special gift of her own for false emphasis.

"Yes, I know Killian Orth," Marian answered over her shoulder, as she vanished behind the screen; for a moment there was

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no sound in the studio but a little *frou frou* from the adjusting of silken petticoats and an occasional billowy sigh from Adela Malard.

Presently she broke out, "Perhaps you think me foolish about this, Miss Genge,—feeling so deeply, I mean ; but, you see, an artist"—she glanced complacently towards her mechanical, dry miniature—"becomes so absorbed. You throw yourself so completely into your subjects that for the time being their experiences almost become your own. All her girlish talk of dances, the dinners, the new admirers ! I thought I knew every corner of that child's heart. Yet see what dignity she had, never even to mention the real person. What is he like?"

Marian's answer was slow in coming. "Like?" She hesitated. "He must be a good deal older than Miss Dunham. He's rather tall and broad and dark ; not fond of going out ; serious, you might say, though he cares for people."

"Dear me !" Adela showed dismay. "You don't sound very enthusiastic." She ruminated over the sterility of this answer,



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and then emitted a diffuse gleam of comprehension. A shade, a subtlety was always dear to Adela, and this one, so delicately indicated by Marian, was as satisfying as the key to a tight-locked door. "You mean——" She trundled over to the screen and stood quite close, speaking through the crack in penetrating whispers. "Romola did mention getting a note from Violet! Of course, I remember now, he had a number of sittings. His mother wanted a picture, and then she died before it was finished. Romola told me she found him less of a nuisance than most men; but somehow I never dreamt of her *feelings* being involved."

Behind the screen Marian suddenly paused in the act of putting in a stud. A look of wildest astonishment, of non-acceptance, flashed across her face. She opened her mouth, as if to exclaim, but closed it over unspoken words with the oddest smile. After all, why not? Why should not Romola come under the spell of Killian's attraction? Why, since he fancied pink rosebuds, was it more absurd for one sallow woman to care for him than another? It was not in the least

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his fault. The very lack of fatuity that so gratified her own taste prevented his ever imagining such a contingency. To her he had only been adorably friendly. Yes, that was the word. She adored him,—adored his thick brown hair, the colored hair that indiscriminating people called black; his vivid eyes, those truly black, if you will, eyes with such possibilities of mirth behind their seriousness; his olive-brown face and irregular, pleasing features! And that was the least part, it was everything. Full of appreciation, wanting only initiative, her mind followed where his led. She absorbed his ideas and gave them back to him the finer for her feminine intuitions. She responded to his interests, had fathomless sympathy for his hopes and disappointments. She had given the whole of herself to him without reserve. Unconscious of what she offered, he took what he needed with sparing hand,—perfect companionship only; but his wife was to be a pink-and-white Miss Violet Dunham! And what on earth was she to do? Live an eternity of fifty or sixty years without him? Marian had not the faintest hope

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of dying; life was much too strong within her. Why! Horrified, she looked into herself. She must have been counting on him; she had not a plan or a thought for the future that did not unconsciously take him for granted.

"Poor, poor Romola!" percolated through the crack. Miss Mallard hovered objectionably on the verge of tears. Marian tingled with irritation. It was bad enough to be such a fool, to suffer so, without having both your pain and folly made grotesque by too apt a caricature. Then her tender heart opened to the fierce little creature to whom nature had been such a grudging step-mother. It was not Marian's custom to take her point of view from such as Adela Mallard, but at present she found relief in thinking of any one but herself. That would come later. Now she must only try to meet the world with a front that should tell nothing. She was even loath to leave the sheltering screen, dreading that the past half-hour had left its mark upon her face; but Adela looked upon her with reassuring eyes.

"This will be worse than Angelo, I am

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afraid," she whispered, when Marian finally emerged and stood before the glass, putting on her hat. The girl felt eager to see if it showed, and was really surprised to find that a heart could have something sharp thrust into it and slowly turned round and round, buried to the hilt and left there without perceptibly altering the outward appearance. Perhaps it was the chance of her being by nature rather pale and melancholy looking. Till this time she had never been melancholy, but able quietly to enjoy life and savor it with much content. Yet, Romola's penetration had not been at fault, and now she had grown perfectly homogeneous. The unlucky face was now beautifully appropriate, only she meant that no one, not even Romola, should have an inkling of the inward change. The thing itself she could probably learn to bear, if only because she must, but Marian's affinity for the past went deeper than a mere fancy for De Musset and Chopin. A conventionally romantic relation between men and women appeared as natural to her as if she had been born to weep and thrill over *Indiana* or *Gerfaut*. The point at which en-

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duration ceased to be possible was that she, unsought, should love a man who with no obstacles or hinderances had simply never thought of her. She resolved to begin the world afresh at that very minute, wiser than before, harder perhaps, but at least carrying her hurt so gallantly that no one might suspect her of having known so much as a second's regret. "Miss Mallard,"—so far, so good; she could control her voice, its deep vibrations showed no tendency to fail,—“will you ask Romola to telephone at what time she wants me to-morrow? I must be off now.” Then, with a queer, sweeping glance about the studio, she fled down the stairs, forcing her step to lose none of its usual buoyant swiftness.

Adela subsided on a cushiony ottoman, slowly reading and re-reading Violet's note. There was a sound of opening doors. “Romola, will you let me do your head?” she asked, explosively, as Miss West emerged from the dark-room.

“All six are reasonably good,—very good, in fact. I took one for myself with her face, not to show anybody. My head! Mercy,

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Adela! you must be crazy. My mother had no more consideration than to name me Romola, when she couldn't possibly guarantee the looks to carry it off; but some ancestor has transmitted sufficient discretion to keep me from letting you waste a piece of good ivory on a face like mine."

"There is something very significant about your appearance, Romola."

Undeterred by the limits of her medium, Miss Mallard burned to interpret a broken heart, and pitched her voice in a key of gentle condolence suited to a house of mourning. Romola eyed her keenly, but decided to await developments, and began deftly folding Marian's discarded hose and jerkin. "Miss Genge hadn't heard of Violet's engagement." Adela was resolved to offer this sick soul sympathy, even if the outward array of prickles made the good deed slightly difficult.

Romola did not meet her half-way. "So I supposed," she answered, dryly.

"Had you suspected it?" Adela's tone would have done to address a childless widow.



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"Suspected a man like Killian Orth of tying himself up with that tight little shrimp-pink rosebud, as you call her!—a thing all will and no brain! That's not quite it, either. She has a brain, a good strong one, but about the size of her heart,—big enough comfortably to perform all functions conducive to her own well-being. If it had even been her sister! Some day Jane Dunham will turn into a woman. Well, he's bound to get just what he deserves for being so dumb!"

"Romola, Romola, don't give way so!" Adela's consolatory powers were called into full play. "Remember"—she laid a flaccid hand on Romola's sharp shoulder with a solacing bleat—"remember your art, Romola. Nothing can take that from you."

Romola shook off the hand with an impatient shrug. "Why on earth are you talking as if there were a corpse in the room? If there's anything the matter, for heaven's sake say it out. You make me nervous."

"Romola, don't try to harden yourself against sympathy; your feeling comes from all that's best in you—you——"

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Miss West's face showed a sudden amazement not less immense than Marian's. She also checked an answer on her very lips and thoughtfully considered this remonstrance. Positively, she began to believe that there were some compensations in an ill-ordered world. Bad as it was, it might be infinitely worse without such blessed stupidity as Adela's, a stupidity which interposed its soft non-comprehension between the grating edges of too sharp realities. It was like feather beds,—not in themselves desirable, but making a good buffer if any one had to lie on broken stone. Here she had been half wild with apprehension lest Marian, emotional as she knew the girl to be, should drop some word of self-betrayal; and Providence, from whom she had never anticipated the slightest help, had sent this dolt to discover a false trail and trumpet it forth to all comers. An ugly, dull flush overspread her meaningless features. Though conscious of it, she made no effort to hide her face from Adela's deploring gaze. She felt the full extent of her sacrifice; the comic inappropriateness of the position she was about to

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assume gave her one quiver of rebellion. Her quarrel with life was less that she wanted unattainable things than that she would have chosen to be the kind of person who could crave them. She would have gladly exchanged her bitter immunity for a broken heart. To have an abnormal aloofness, to be incapable of certain feelings, was harder to bear than any amount of thwarted passion. And all this blighted intensity had found no relief in her genuine love for Marian Genge. Always doubting, she dreaded the growth of one of those morbid friendships in which some women vent their surplus vitality. She scolded Marian till even the girl's unending sweetness nearly turned against her gibes. She was uncaressing with her, critical, almost contemptuous, while inwardly she fairly yearned over her and longed to expend herself in services. Now the chance had come, and in the best way; Marian would never even suspect. It was whimsical, quixotic, intangible, but also very real. This myth of her own misplaced affections, the jesting pity of which she would be the object, might divert the world's

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eyes until Marian should be able to present at least an undamaged surface.

The silence was only broken by an irrepressible sniff from Adela. With an inward flash of sardonic mirth, Romola gave the kind of sigh that would befit her companion's anticipations. The flush, the sigh, the unexpected gentleness moved Adela past all power of self-control. A pair of enormous, oblong tears coursed slowly down her pale-pink cheeks.

"If she knew how like a cow she looks and how little I feel like her calf," Romola reflected, as she said, in a carefully subdued voice, "I know that you mean kindly, Adela ; but it will be kinder still if you never speak to me of this again. I can bear it best alone." "That was an inspiration," she congratulated herself. "Even to cover Marian Genge, I could not dramatize such a state of mind often. The mercy of having a perfect fool to play to. No one on earth but Adela would swallow me in a mood of sweet Christian resignation."

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cousin, I don't quite relish having a strange little Miss Violet Dunham see me for the first time in this outfit."

"I'd a letter from Violet this morning. She didn't say a word about coming to-day." Romola's voice grew even dryer and crosser as she went back to her camera and began adjusting the lens. For a while no one spoke. Marian appreciatively watched the air of fine concentration possessing Romola, the trained clever movements, jerky and awkward in themselves, but competent and certain. It was perfectly true, she reflected. Apart from her work the painter was a plain, forgettable mite, whose fiery nature continually spurred her into this passion of effort, making her an uncomfortably prickly being to herself and all the world. Without ever resenting it, Marian had come in frequent contact with these pricks. Henceforth they should only inspire in her fresh patience and tenderness towards a friend with whom the world did not go well.

After gazing absorbedly at Marian, with contracting pupils, Romola laid questioning fingers on a fold of the background. "How

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never gave any one that face to be happy with. You'll marry the wrong man, and find the right one at your wedding-breakfast. That's the least. Bother ! Some one knocking." Threading her way through a fortification of black-framed screens sparsely decorated with a few admirable prints, Romola grudgingly admitted a large, fluffy-bodied woman, whose diffuse, comprehensive smile impartially embraced Marian, the camera, and a small easel placed under the north window. The new-comer carried an open-work net bag holding bulgy paper parcels, and in one shabbily gloved hand she bore an unopened letter. Five flights had rendered her for the time being speechless.

"Better sit down, Adela ; you are puffy." Romola showed the scant sympathy of the lean for the fat.

"Those stairs are only fit for squirrels ; they nearly kill me every time I come," put in Marian, with less regard for truth than for Miss Adela Mallard's feelings. "And, Romola," she went on, "do hurry. Miss Mallard's sitter is due soon, and we shall be in the way. Besides, even if she is your own



## II

“Do I Smell of Bread and Butter?”

THE preparations for Violet's marriage created so fierce a storm-centre of millinery and alphabetical lists that Jane Dunham positively lingered on her way home from school, stoically disregarding the sensible pricking of her keen young appetite. Jane saw no chance of escaping to the country for a game of golf or other rational employment; but as she strolled along dejectedly, mournful over the probable waste of a warm April afternoon, her lot received a slight amelioration. She was joined by a festively attired young man of some eight-and-twenty, whose manner showed no taint of condescension towards her pigtailed and ink-stained period of existence. They nodded to each other sociably as equals; he turned to walk at her side with a laconic word on the weather.

“Coaching parade this afternoon?” Jane asked.

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"Yes, I was let in for it. Much rather have had a row,—the river is just right now. Would they be down on your going with me some day soon, do you think?" he hazarded.

Jane shook her head dubiously, then broke out with perfect directness: "Do I smell of bread and butter, Archie?"

"Let me carry some of those books," Archie Leighton answered. Then, with great deliberation, "Well, you know, I can't exactly remember ever having smelt you."

"Don't be piggish." The girl was quite good-humored. "No, I couldn't think of letting you have them. It doesn't go with a frock coat and gardenia to be carrying a bunch of school-books."

"Not when you're walking home with a school-girl?" He reached out a gloved hand. "Here, give them over."

With a friendly shake of the head Jane shifted her burden out of his reach. She was a handsome, boyish creature, well built, athletic, and pleasantly approachable. Her tastes were few but ardent; horses and dogs ranked first in the business of life, friend-

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ships occupied her attention to a reasonable extent. Two conscious rules of conduct had so far amply sufficed to cover every emergency of her wholesome young existence,—to keep “fit” and to preserve a certain standard of “straightness” in every human relation. Archie found her infinitely companionable, and wished she were his sister. She considered him “the whitest” of all the men who came to see Violet, respected his judgment of a horse, and constantly urged upon him never to go out of training.

“Beastly in town this good weather,” she presently remarked, in a tone of ripe disgust. “And as for our house, it’s going to be a regular den from now till the wedding.”

“Hard luck,” Archie grunted, sympathetically. “How do you like him?”

“Killian! He’s all right. Nice man; no nonsense. He can’t stand the racket himself; cut off to-day to his place.”

“Gone to Merton?” Archie asked.

“No, his other place at the mines. There was something wrong. One Dago pasted another with an axe. Killian looks after them a lot himself. Wish he’d take me

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along. Such rot my being at school ; it's not as if I had to learn anything. If I were preparing for college next year it would be different ; but they say I've got to go out, so where's the use of all this grind now?" Both Jane and Archie possessed an ordinary stock of civilized English, but in each other's society they were prone to indulge in the easiest current vernacular.

"So Orth turned tail!" Archie grinned derisively. He was a square-featured, sun-burnt young man, at first glance hardly presenting enough salient characteristics to account for his undeniable delightfulness. Neither stupid nor clever, he was endowed with a kind of cheerful good sense which enabled him to get through life creditably yet with a most complete enjoyment. "What's going on at the house?" he asked, with interest.

"Going on! You ought to be there!" Jane's voice expressed endless disfavor.

"Yes, tell me all about it," Archie urged. "You know I'm just up from Aiken ; the whole business was a surprise to me. I knew Orth at the club ; very decent chap, but I

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never heard of his being with Violet, you know."

"Guess it didn't break you up very badly." Jane's sufferings had made her positively ill-natured.

"No, I'm not wearing the willow," he assented.

"I wish you wouldn't wear that gardenia,—they have such a filthy smell." Jane was letting herself go.

"I'm on my way to a breakfast ; that's why I'm dressed up so early. But there's nothing the matter with the gardenia, and I've very little time to listen. What makes you so grouchy about smells to-day, anyhow?"

"I'm wondering," said Jane, despondently, "if I'll ever be like Violet. Till she came out it was bread and butter ; you couldn't miss it. Then it changed to roses. Whether she had 'em or not, she always smelt of roses. What do you suppose it will be when she's married? But never mind that now ; I want to tell you all I know about it. She met him at dinner. It was an older dinner than Violet usually gets asked to,—all married people, with a widow for Mr. Orth. The widow had

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the grippe, and Violet was telephoned for to take her place at the last minute. It happened she had an evening off, and so——”

Archie glanced at his watch.

“Yes, I’m hurrying. The next day going down-town she got into a crowded car. Some man was fresh ; put his arm around her,—been drinking, I suppose. Mr. Orth saw it. He picked the man up and pitched him into the street. Violet had been awfully scared. He brought her home. Then he just came once or twice, it seemed to me,—it couldn’t have been more,—sent her flowers, and they were engaged.”

“Quick work !” Archie was no squanderer of words.

“Yes ; they didn’t lose much time. Violet wrote a hundred and eighteen notes ; I don’t know how many he wrote. Then everybody rushed to the house and gave her presents and flowers. I never want to see another florist’s box as long as I live. She was so afraid he wouldn’t choose the right kind of ring ; but he did,—big pearl between two diamonds. The girls all started in bringing her teacups and things. Now they dine out



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every night, and go somewhere else afterwards, to meet family friends, family, and that sort of thing. Archie, do you know, since it came out, I don't believe Violet has ever had time to go off with him alone for a whole afternoon. She's always answering notes or seeing people. Now that they are to be married in June, it's getting worse and worse ; but I'm beginning to think she positively loves it."

"Well, I suppose that's why she's marrying him, isn't it?" Archie suggested.

"Oh ! I don't mean that part." Jane had a minute's hesitation, and her definite young voice perceptibly softened. "That's what she has the least of. It's the fuss I'm talking about. If ever I'm married, I'll whisk off round the corner and not tell any one till it's over."

Slowly as they had been strolling, the pair had now reached the scene of Jane's trials, a solid, red-brick house with marble steps and spotless plate-glass windows, through which were visible layers of expensive curtains, parted to disclose a great sheaf of long-stemmed, red roses.

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Jane lingered on the steps. "Look at those," she ejaculated, "stuck up in the window for people to see! Violet's tastes are so simple,—the American Beauty is her favorite flower."

"Cheer up, old girl; it can't last forever." Archie strove to administer encouragement.

"I declare, you're a good sort,"—Jane was conscious of some compunctions,—"to listen to all my growls. Really, I've not had a chance of letting off before, and it's done me heaps of good. Good-bye; better go; you must be late now."

"Good-bye; see you soon." Archie turned to leave, but Jane called him.

"Look here, I met a friend of yours,—she came to see Violet. Mr. Orth sent her, and I think she's first-class. Her name is Marian Genge. I don't see why on earth he didn't want to marry her. Violet is all right, of course; but Miss Genge is so much more his kind."

Archie came back close to Jane. "I'm very glad he didn't, or that she didn't; anyhow, that they didn't pull it off between them." The young man had grown notice-

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ably white under his healthy tan. He spoke with complete seriousness. "Look here, Jane, there's not a person alive but you I've told this to: I want Marian Genge myself; want her badly."

Jane took his confidence without a quiver. "Shows your sense," she said, with much approval. "Good-bye, old man; good luck! Better hurry up and tell her, hadn't you?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Dunham was already at lunch when Jane joined her after making a hasty attack on the ink-stains and responding to the endearments of Vixen, an imperiously loving fox-terrier. The black, polished table was rich with particularly ugly Middle-Victorian silver, the china tended towards chocolate hues of a costly hideousness. In the centre stood another huge sheaf of roses. The air of the meal was disturbed.

"Violet lunching out?" Jane felt heartily tired of her sister's doings, but Violet was one of those people whom every one inevitably inquired after.

"No; not to-day." Mrs. Dunham was an undiluted, essential type of prosperous

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mother, belonging to the world and tolerating nothing beyond its influence. "She's having her last sitting for that miniature ; it's been put off so many times. Poor child ! she'll be worn out, simply driven from morning till night."

Jane prepared a roast potato for herself, smuggling a bit of beefsteak to Vixen, whose delicately moistened nose peeped from under a chair well out of Mrs. Dunham's range. Vixen had also felt the pressure of circumstances, family and servants having reached a state of tension which made them resentful of the most trifling pecadillo.

"More presents to-day?" Jane inquired. She had found it quite useless to start any topic which did not bear directly on the great event.

Mrs. Dunham responded cordially to this sign of interest. "Three up-stairs ; but I've left them for Violet to open, she is so systematic. There she comes now. I wonder if this tenderloin is fit to eat. It must be stone cold."

Vixen deliberately withdrew far under the table, a maid bustled in with hot plates, and

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after a minute's delay the door opened to admit a slim little lady, perfectly pretty, with every pink or pearly tint and every delicious curve of blooming girlhood. Under such soft texture and delicate hue only Romola West's jaundiced eye could have spied out a significant firmness of daintily arched nose and clear-cut cherry lips. Little pearly ears nestled flat under waves of fine, neat golden hair. A plumed black hat threw a soft shadow over the wide-open blue eyes, enhancing the touch of pathos suggested by the inward lift of well-marked brown eyebrows. Pulling off her gloves, Violet showed small, strong hands, white as mother-of-pearl; there was a rounded pearly quality in her clear, youthful voice. "I stopped on the way home to see those designs for table silver," she announced. "It really is a great responsibility. I wish Killian were here. Of course your taste is very good, mamma, but I shouldn't like to choose anything that wasn't exactly what he fancied. The forks of that egg pattern are quite correct, but I'm not sure about a little curve in the handle of the spoons. Yet they have certain advantages."

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"I shouldn't think there was much difference in spoons." Jane was trying to find relief in scratching Vixen's back with a sympathetic heel, but this remark slipped out unawares.

Violet turned a perfectly good-tempered gaze upon her. "I wouldn't have cared, either, four years ago," she said, tolerantly, "but now it all seems so different. The home, the place you're going to live in, and everything about it really matter a lot,—the setting for your whole life. It's worth taking some trouble to have it satisfactory. Killian feels so, too."

"I suppose Jane thinks you ought to furnish your house with puppies. I hope her husband won't cling to having the say in his own stables." Mrs. Dunham really cared for her second daughter, although frequently irritated by the girl's boyishness and simplicity; moreover, having a keen flare for coming fashions in behavior as well as in dress, she was learning to accept the fact that many of Jane's contemporaries exhibited the same peculiarities, and that there seemed to be growing up a race of young men who



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found nothing repellent in the primitive ways and rugged conversation of these young ladies.

Being young and still capable of foolish optimism, Jane paid no attention to this rebuke, proceeding unwisely to ask, "Violet, couldn't you cut everything and come out to the club for a game of golf this afternoon? It will rest you."

"Oh, no!" Violet was almost shocked. "Madame Rose will be here at half-past two."

"Well, she can't stay all day," Jane persisted.

"Not all day, but a long time. I must talk over both dresses,—the wedding and the going-away,—besides planning for eight bridesmaids."

"You used to like golf," Jane grumbled. "Does being engaged make a person stop doing whatever they did before? Isn't there anything you really like for itself, so that you must do it, no matter what happens?"

"Jane, you mustn't bother Violet; it isn't nice of you to plague her." There were moments when Mrs. Dunham devoutly

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wished it might have been Jane who was to depart from under her sheltering wings on the 6th of June.

"Not nice!" Jane rose from her seat and suddenly gave Violet a demonstrative hug and kiss. "I expect I don't understand," she said, repentantly. "Come along, Vixen."

"By the way, mamma,"—Violet's mind was travelling serenely along its own track,—"Killian asked me one thing about the wedding,—it's the only thing he did speak of,—and I'd like to do it, though it's rather queer." Jane stopped at the door to hear Killian's request and Mrs. Dunham listened with a little air of irrepressible anxiety. Violet went on: "He wants that Miss Genge to be bridesmaid. You see, his sister is a widow; besides, she's too old,—ever so much older than Killian. He has no girl first-cousins, and he and Marian have been such friends always. I only think, as she's not one of my friends, it looks unusual; her not being a relation either. But, of course, since Beatrice is going to Europe, I have the eighth place."

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"I certainly think you ought to ask her." There was a note of relief in Mrs. Dunham's voice. "I'm told many people admire her appearance, though to me she is not good-looking. But she has a nice figure, of that thin kind, and carries herself well; and those really are the important things for a bridesmaid." In a generally satisfactory state of affairs there was one point on which Mrs. Dunham felt at once baffled and vaguely apprehensive. She liked everything about her daughter's engagement except—well, it really amounted to her not liking Killian. Preferring to understand people, she was constantly annoyed by an element of unexpectedness in her future son-in-law. She did not doubt his having some consistent rule of conduct, but for the life of her she could not make it out. Consequently his actions were never to be counted on. It was not that she objected in the least to his having what is called a past, but, granted Killian, she never felt quite sure what effect that past might have on Violet's future. After all, though it was a pity that a young man, rich and in a position of almost public

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responsibility, should have wasted years in an affair with an older married woman, it might have been infinitely worse. In the eyes of the world he had been rather sinned against than sinning; besides, since she did not expect her daughters to be so fortunate as to marry saints, it would be hard to find a man whose early life showed no greater folly. The real trouble lay in her suspecting Killian of a terrible defect of character, which might crop out in strangely inconvenient places. "Do you know, George," she confided to her quiet, negative husband, "at times I wonder if dear Killian is not just a little quixotic."

Violet's parents were sitting over their tea in a room called the library,—a room in which no mortal person had ever disturbed the rows of calf-bound classics.

"Oh, no! I don't believe he is." Long practice had enabled Mr. Dunham always to supply the appropriate negative or affirmative without taxingly close attention to the substance of his wife's remarks. A hard-working, pudgy little man, he never really concerned himself with family affairs, merely

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fulfilling to admiration his special function of supplying unlimited funds. His own interests, apart from business, lay in collecting book-plates ; but these he kept at his office, never obtruding this unpractical taste upon his wife and daughters. In spite of a fair measure of physical companionship, his life was inherently solitary, though the statement of this fact would have occasioned him a good deal of surprise, and would have been indignantly met by a flat denial from Mrs. Dunham, who conscientiously devoted a portion of each day to "consulting George."

"Well,"—her tone was far from reassured,—"I only hope she'll be happy. To-day she gave me quite a turn. I thought she was going to say something about Margaretta Chant."

"Does she know?" Mr. Dunham sometimes listened.

"That's just what I'm not sure about. I hardly like to ask, in case she's never heard. Of course Killian hasn't had anything to do with that woman for years. It was broken off long before Violet came out ; but you

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never can tell what a girl may have come across."

"Mamma!" Violet's trilling voice sounded at the door.

"Come in, dear. Here is your tea." Mrs. Dunham habitually adopted a sympathetic tone in addressing a young woman in the throes of arranging a trousseau.

Violet kissed her father's forehead as she perched lightly on the arm of his chair. The conference with Madame Rose had not impaired her outward freshness, and a flickering dimple revealed some hidden source of amusement. "Mamma," she began, "we'll talk over her designs later. There's something else I simply can't keep to myself. Miss Mallard told me to-day while she was finishing the miniature." Mrs. Dunham stirred her tea rather briskly, but wisely forbore from questions. Violet went on: "The reason she told is that she thinks a girl has a right to know how other women would value what she has got." Mr. Dunham looked nervously towards the door. These feminine subtleties were distinctly not within his province. Violet continued, in a tone of

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pure narration: "She says another woman cares for Killian,—is simply crazy about him. Of course, it has always been quite impossible, it's——"

Mrs. Dunham broke in: "I wouldn't mind a bit, if I were you."

"Mind!" Violet's clear laugh showed unblemished confidence. "It must be hard on her; though it really serves her right for being so foolish. But what difference can it possibly make to me? I'm scarcely going to feel jealous of Cousin Romola West!"



### III

#### Exit Margaretta Chant!

WHEN Killian had done his utmost towards unravelling the rights and wrongs of a dispute which relegated John Lipscak to the hospital and Giacomo Malatesta to the county jail, he set out slowly from the company's offices to his own house. Although assailed by occasional misgivings as to his cowardice in abandoning Violet to the maelstrom of obligations which had so promptly engulfed them both, he really was satisfied that the increasing frequency of ugly disturbances demanded his constant presence at the mines. Moreover, Mrs. Norris, his only sister, had chosen to spend a few days at Laurelton before taking leave of America for the last time. It suited her plans to reach there before him, and Killian was now resolutely dealing with a sub-conscious desire to linger on the way home, and so postpone the inevitable catechising which surely awaited

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him at Julia's hands. A series of Southern visits had prevented her seeing him since the announcement of his engagement, consequently it would only be natural and fitting for her to question him about Violet. He confessed this to be reasonable, but wished it well over, and made no effort to quicken his pace, although the sharp mountain air was so crisp as to give a sense of unseasonableness to the lingering sunlight of a long April afternoon. Children playing in the shabby village street showed buttony red noses, and purplish fat hands sticking out of thin calico sleeves. Mine laborers, their faces shiny from recent scouring, clustered in groups on door-steps, chatting and smoking. An Italian woman, wearing a bright shawl on her head, marched out of the company store, carrying a bag of meal and a baby. She gave Killian a broad smile and stopped to display her child. He looked with a queer new interest at the black-eyed atom. It seemed perfectly good and happy, in spite of an arrangement of clothes which combined the least possible warmth with the utmost amount of inconvenient bundling.

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"Is it well?" Killian asked, in fluent Italian.

"Well! Surely one could see he was in beautiful health: and why should he not be, when a whole dollar had gone for this, which the Holy Father himself had blessed." With pride she fished out of the baby's voluminous attire a tiny leaden image. "Hung about his neck, this will preserve him from the summer sickness."

"But aren't his hands rather thin and wrinkled? Is that all right? They seem cold, too." Killian touched the little fist inquiringly, feeling helpless in his masculine ignorance. Violet would have had exactly the proper word at command. Her intuitive knowledge about matters of which she could have acquired no possible experience had already filled him with silent amazement. When they first met, at the dinner, she had only attracted him by her complete prettiness and delicious youth. She was not in the least shy, but prattled of what interested her, in perfect good faith that all the world must wish to know why the Monday Dancing Class had been changed to Tuesday, and how many of the ushers at Mildred Whaley's

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wedding were to come from New York. In mid-season people naturally talked of weddings, as they discussed débutantes in the autumn and ate soft-shell crabs in June. At the time he found her amusing and restful, but afterwards he had thought less of her than, in a slightly wistful fashion, of himself. Killian was five-and-thirty, and the only marked impression Violet left upon him was a poignant realization of the gulf dividing his maturity from this radiant vision of youth. Yet it merely needed a chance meeting, her fright, her instant reliance upon him, and instinctive appropriation of his strength and efficiency to bridge over all distance between them. Then, one day, things reached a point where he could take her in his arms and kiss her ; she had trembled, blushed, and submitted. He had never conceived of her as his wife till he found himself asking her. She consented without coquetry, without reserve.

At first his feeling had been almost remorse for the completeness with which he was taking possession of this warm, clinging creature who so freely gave him her youth,

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her confidence. Then, with humorous astonishment, he discovered that Violet was possessing him quite as fully as he could ever hope to possess her. She took pride in him, caressed him, consulted him, but through it all he had a whimsical suspicion of whirling along in her wake. He had gathered her to him for no better reason than her exquisiteness; whether blinded to other qualities, or whether the qualities themselves were evoked by changed conditions, he was now discovering in her both strength and wisdom. Every step he took along the homeward road deepened his longing for her. Also the practical knowledge she was displaying in the management of her own affairs would be infinitely helpful to him in ruling this turbulent, sooty kingdom. It had been his rare luck to reach out for a blossom and gain a real helpmeet; some one to aid in carrying out a thousand plans born of a hope to better these, his people.

Where the broad, unpaved street leaving the village merged into a high-road, winding past the better houses and a church into open country, he was joined by a dirty

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woman, whose manner betokened a high sense of injury held in check by extreme personal merit.

"Good-evening, Mr. Orth. It's a late spring," she observed, with an intonation that held him completely responsible for the weather. "I don't see how poor people are to get along these days."

"It's a good thing you have plenty of coal." To the superintendent's disgust, the culm-heap at Laurelton was freely accessible to pickers.

"It's the nights that are so bad," she promptly rejoined. "And I had a coverlid,—turkey-red and warm. John's bed it went on. He made the money himself, after school-hours, doing odd jobs up at your house, in the garden. But, indeed, there's few to be done nowadays."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that he spent his earnings so thriftily." Killian was preparing to move off.

"Yes, but wait! Where is it now?" She eyed Killian thoughtfully. "It cost six dollars. And now it's that bad a sight I just threw it away over the back fence."

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"What happened?" Killian was fairly in for it.

"An Eyetalian woman's goat!" Her voice expressed the most withering sarcasm. "I guess it didn't find such good victuals at home. It got in through a hole in my fence Mr. Johnson promised to have mended when the office was repaired; but of course he forgot. The dirty beast just took one end and sucked and sucked and nibbled till there wasn't a yard fit for a dog to lie on."

"Well,"—Killian feared he was being ably played,—"I think the owner of that goat should make good the damage, if it was done on your property."

"Just what I say, and ran after you—though I'm a sick woman and shouldn't even walk, the doctor's always telling me—to stop you and get you to go back and let her know you'll not see me imposed on by any foreigner. It's that Dago woman back there, with the skinny, black baby. Mrs. Reppetto they call her."

Killian felt this to be checkmate, and, weakly promising her a new quilt from the store, he endeavored to extricate himself;



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but she complained: "And what should I do with such a thing now, and the summer coming on us? Better give me the money."

"Keep it to warm you next winter." Killian was quite elated at his penetration in suspecting six dollars to be an imaginative value for a turkey-red coverlet; but his self-satisfaction immediately received a blow. The woman's face suddenly came back to him. He now remembered her well. She was a notoriously troublesome Mrs. O'Brian, and John, the industrious little school-boy, must certainly be that Jack O'Brian who, after a black career as an inveterate poacher of small fruit and vegetables, truant and breaker of windows, had attained man's estate some years since, and left Laurelton to be a barber in the nearest city. "So she has got a new quilt," he reflected, "for one that must be well past its first youth; and I simply demoralize these people by letting them see that I'm fool enough to swallow any fairy-tale they may tell me. It's so much easier to give than to be judicious. When Violet is here she will take all that in hand and see that they get real

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intelligent assistance." The sombreness of Killian's face lit up with a smile of infinite tenderness and sweetness as he thought of the future and that efficient rosebud waiting at home by the fire,—waiting his return ! He was quite humble about Violet, and had no wish to train her to his uses ; only as she seemed to have brain as well as heart and beauty there was but reason the more for regarding her as a precious possession.

As he turned into the path leading from the high-road to his own house, he smiled to think how Violet would have coped with Mrs. O'Brian, and of how she could have given the ignorant Italian mother advice far more beneficial than the coin which was his only medium for expressing a wish that something should be done for the baby's comfort. Possibly he was all wrong : that might be the right way for a baby to look. Violet would have known by the same birthright of wisdom which made her so unerring in the choice of a rug, or a sideboard, or, indeed,—had he but seen it,—of a husband.

Mrs. Norris was sitting before a glowing wood-fire in the large living-room that served

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at once as parlor and library. It had always been the Orths' custom to surround their lives with as little display as possible. Family tradition decreed that it would be an error of judgment, as well as of taste, to present too strong a contrast between the master's abode and the rows of decent, ugly cottages provided for his thousands of miners in the valley below. Consequently, although their house was comfortable and not inharmonious, both within and without there was careful avoidance of ostentatious luxury. Even the garden showed only a bit of neat lawn and a few flower-beds, shut out from the road by a high hedge.

Mrs. Norris had exhausted the charms of breathing pure air. She had vainly ransacked the library shelves for new novels. The local doctor, the clergyman, and the superintendent's wife had ceased to afford her a ray of distraction, and nothing but Killian's return could have induced her to bear the solitude of Laurelton for another hour.

"Do you expect your wife to live here?" she asked, after kissing her brother effusively. "Because, if you do, I think it your duty to

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have her up to see the neighborhood before she orders her wedding-dress. I have no doubt you have told her all about it, but telling gives so little idea. For instance, you cannot imagine how many people assured me that since my last visit, within the past eight years, America had really grown tolerable. Ameliorations had taken place, civilization seemed to be gaining foothold. My lease is up in June, so, before renewing it,—although you can always sublet a good apartment in Paris,—still, unless I was going to live there, I should not care to be saddled with a long lease. What was I saying? Oh, yes. I thought I would just let some friends have it for the winter and come over here and see for myself. What do I find? Such confusion coming out of the opera that I catch cold waiting for my carriage. A shop-girl calls me ‘dear,’ and tells me that ladies no longer wear chemises. I suppose they’ve just gone out on this side, and people don’t know that they came back two years ago. Then the theatres! *Théâtre de banlieue*, my dear, *pure et simple!* Though, indeed, you can hardly call it that, with the plays they give.

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Really, if I had a young daughter! And as for society, there really isn't as much as there used to be when I was a girl. In Paris I'm a rich woman,—*richissime*, even. Here I could hardly attempt to go out at Newport."

In the past Killian had sometimes felt bound to remonstrate with Julia for chronic absenteeism. He now basely gave way to extreme relief that the Atlantic Ocean was to interpose its breadth between her and his future household. "Well, of course," his tone was lenient, "if you are happier abroad——"

"And the servants, Killian! How you stand that old coachman, who looks like a Confederate general! Do you know, talking of appearances,"—she had been inspecting her brother with some attention,—"it's an odd thing I never thought of it before, but seeing you after such an age your face makes a fresh impression, quite as if you were a stranger. If your legs weren't so long, any one who didn't know would take you for an Italian. You have the coloring,—olive, with a thatch of black hair."

"How are you? You are looking well," Killian interrupted, not at all interested in his

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own appearance. "Has the mountain air broken up your malaria?"

"Yes; but it brought the chills out at first. I certainly must not stay so late in Venice another year. Yesterday and the day before I was wretched, positively wretched. Fever and regular creeps; but now I've shaken them off, instead of their shaking me, you know." By many people Mrs. Norris was considered a bright woman. "And I'm going back to town as soon as you and I have had some good long talks. But you have never answered my question. Is Violet coming here to live?"

"Hardly that." Killian felt a sudden shyness in alluding to Violet. Their marriage, the future, the bond which was to unite him with this gracious child seemed altogether too delicate and sacred to be even hinted at. Still, he recognized that a man can hardly refuse to tell his sister where he and his wife propose living. He was standing with his back to the fire, his hands thrust deep into his pockets; his vivid, irregular face looked oddly embarrassed. "You see, we are going abroad, while Merton is being done up and

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refurnished. We shall make our head-quarters there at present. It's an easy distance when I have business in town. Of course, I shall always have to spend a good deal of time at the mines, and Violet"—he hesitated a little over the name—"will come here in summer,—as soon as Merton grows too hot."

"So you are in love with her," commented his sister, whose powers of observation had always been exasperatingly ahead of her discretion.

Killian put a fresh log on the fire. "Yes," he answered, shortly, seeing that Mrs. Norris was likely to insist on a definite statement.

"You know, or rather you don't," she went on, with the air of having made her first point satisfactorily, and passing on systematically to the next, "that I have been seeing Margaretta Chant at the Wardleys?"

Killian met this statement without show of interest.

"You needn't be so close-mouthed," his sister went on. "She told me all about it,—everything from beginning to end; and certainly you have nothing to conceal."



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"I have nothing to tell." Killian's voice was forbidding, but Julia had a perfectly objectless desire to unburden herself. The day had been so long and dull that conversation was becoming imperatively necessary; besides, to her mind, there was fitness in disposing of Mrs. Chant before they took up the subject of Violet. She therefore went on, quite unabashed:

"When poor Ned Chant died I was in a perfect panic for fear you might marry her. That is the reason your engagement to Violet is such a relief. The dear child wrote me the sweetest little note."

"I don't quite see why you should be so keen about my marrying any one." Killian's face and voice were decidedly grim, but he preferred making a diversion to directly rebuking Julia.

"Why, you were perfectly bound to marry. Every man who is like you, steady and good, you know, must have his own fireside. Margaretta fully realizes this, too. But why don't you ask me what she said?"

There was a momentary gleam of saturnine humor in Killian's onyx eyes.

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"I'm only too afraid you may insist on telling me."

"Well, it is nothing any one need object to hearing. She as much as said that after you were taken ill at her house that time—but of course we all knew without her telling that it had been no fault of yours. You were a mere boy compared to her——"

"Do stop, Julia!" Killian broke in. "It is no use raking all that up now. The facts are that I asked Mrs. Chant to leave her husband and run off with me. She refused, after which our intimacy ended."

Julia looked at him with approbation. "Upon my word, Killian, there are very few men like you. But why keep it up when she positively wants it to be known? Not by every one,—she will never try to make trouble. You see, it is not so unnatural. She is awfully *passée* now, and women sometimes feel that way. She would really hate to have her own contemporaries forget that she——"

Killian scowled so deeply that Julia thought best to go on in a changed key. "Oh, she would not do you any harm for the world. She says you behaved admirably. She only blames

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herself. As time passed and you realized the position, she ought to have seen that you wouldn't go on that way, just quietly. She appreciated the stand you took. You were willing to sacrifice your whole life to her, but you couldn't keep on fooling poor Ned Chant——"

Killian had turned his back and was staring into the fire. "You seem to forget,"—he spoke in the tone of a person doing heavy penance, but whatever mistakes his past might contain, at least he would never repudiate it,—“you seem to forget that at the time I did not look on my plan in the light of a sacrifice.”

This suggestion Julia simply brushed aside, going on speculatively. "The funny thing is she doesn't mind your engagement now a bit. Her real revolt and jealousy came when you began to go so much with Marian Genge. Neither Margaretta nor I would have approved of that for a minute. She's an odd, unaccountable kind of girl—she——"

"My dear Julia." The limit of endurance had been passed. "Never, never again speak of this to any one." The gleam of

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amusement suddenly flickered as Killian recognized the preposterousness of asking her completely to renounce a toothsome topic. "That is, talk it over with your own friends, if you have to, but you must see that it is not a possible subject of conversation for me."

"Well! How you do go on!" Julia hated quarrelling. "Of course, I won't if you object," she hastened to propitiate him, although his scruples seemed absurdly far fetched. She would have felt no impropriety in discussing a discarded admirer of her own, and her imagination was not sufficiently discriminating to see that the cases were hardly parallel. "There is just one thing," she added, "in modern English novels,—not that I read them,—there is a kind of man who thinks it his duty to tell his wife—— Now, you seem to me—to be perfectly frank with you—almost foolish enough to do that. No woman would dream of minding the thing itself, but any sensible girl would hate a man for talking to her about it."

"I believe," said Killian, slowly, "that all women are wiser than any man." Mrs.

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Norris smiled assent; she found nothing equivocal in this generalization. He went on: "You are perfectly right, Julia. It might ease my conscience to confess that Mrs. Chant's discretion rather than mine kept us out of trouble, but it could hardly be pleasant hearing for Miss Dunham."

"Have your own way." Julia was beginning to lose patience. "It's always wise to keep up appearances; but with Margaretta Chant proclaiming it from the house-tops——"

"Time for me to brush up for dinner," Killian exclaimed, fairly driven from the field by his sister's persistence.

Indeed, he reflected, with much irritation, if Mrs. Chant had been so inconceivable as to relate that which the most ordinary decorum should have made her struggle to conceal, it was much less for her sake than his own that he wished certain episodes of his life thrust well out of sight. Whatever he might say to Julia, Killian was well aware that the real blame had not lain with him. A spirited, attractive young fellow, he had been taken with fever at Margaretta Chant's

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house. When desperate illness gave way to slow convalescence, she had watched over him, petted him, and experimented to the top of her bent with his fresh, young emotions, finding compensation for the tameness of a dull husband in gaining absolute ascendancy over a charming companion considerably her junior. Of course, he was soon head over ears in love with her. But this would have done no permanent damage if she had not ended by falling in love with him. After a lapse of years Killian still winced at remembering the next phase of their intercourse. Julia's brutal statement was only too correct. A latent sense of honor had finally awakened in him, and he passionately urged her to fly in the face of the world and leave her husband. This she was quite unprepared to do, and he utterly refused to prolong a situation whose odiousness overpowered even his love for her. With the break that followed, Killian recognized the destruction of his youth. Like all disappointed men, he considered that side of life closed to him, and flung himself with bitter energy into hard work.

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He saw few women, spending his holidays in long hunting trips in the West, but always managing to pass a part of every month with his mother, at Merton. This was a place of some pretension, conveniently near town, but verging on real, unspoilt country. The immediate neighborhood had become frankly suburban ; and finding its inhabitants little to his taste, he spent an abundant leisure in long, solitary rides, steeping himself in a rustic beauty of wood and meadow infinitely delightful after Laurelton and its bleak mountains, with their bristling array of sparse, dead trees. Sometimes his mother was alone, but occasionally he found staying with her the daughter of an old friend, a quiet, graceful girl named Marian Genge.

Marian lived with her father, at an old farm, ten good miles from Merton. When she first grew up, friends and relations in town had taken care to give the girl opportunities of going into society, Mr. Genge being far too immersed in the gentlest of dilettante farming to occupy himself with his daughter's amusements. Marian had done credit to her hosts, and seemed to enjoy



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herself to the full ; but at the end of a few seasons she came contentedly back to the country, there taking up a pleasant, idle existence, without apparently craving more excitement than could be obtained from occasionally accepting an invitation and entertaining a fair number of informal visitors.

Never speaking directly of his misfortunes, Killian soon fell into the way of making unconscionable demands upon Marian's sympathies. Having temporarily exhausted all poignant emotion, he was yet exquisitely alive to her fineness of perception, responsiveness, and penetrating charm. With this soothing companionship, unsuspectedly, gradually, she had nursed his sick spirit back to health and happiness. In time he grew vaguely conscious of a lessened pain, but the past, though falling from him, must needs leave him sad and old,—older than his years. At this very juncture, as he viewed life with a certain grayness, the chance insolence of a drunken lout had suddenly precipitated him into intimacy with a fresh young girl, who treated him as an admirer, without a suspicion of his being a shattered

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wreck completely removed from all such possibilities. And now he was to begin the world anew ; but into this new life he loyally proposed bringing one old friend, and as far as might be sharing with her the brightness which must henceforth fall to him. And so he had asked Violet, as a special favor, that one of her bridesmaids might be Marian Genge.

## IV

### Kate and Nimrod

**B**Y the time that April was passing into May, Romola West had finished her Troubadour poster, openly bewailing a refinement of outline and pose far too delicate for those crashing reds and yellows with which she perforce must blazon it to catch the public eye.

Marian Genge's services being no longer needed, the girl thankfully went home to Halstead, hoping there to recover at least a portion of her customary peace of mind. No one met her at the station, but, moving through an array of empty milk-cans, she secured a dusty hack which in fine weather deigned to meet the afternoon train. She drew a breath of relief at the sweetness of the country. Small, almost rose-colored leaves were beginning to clothe naked maple boughs. The road was here and there strewn with petals from overblown apple-

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orchards, whose tender green showed brilliant against black trunks and branches. It was sunset, with birds in full swing of that commotion which precedes bedtime. Fat gentlemen robins, perched on tree-tops, challenged all the world to a tournament of song; lady robins, seated on lower twigs, unobtrusively incited their admirers to fierce physical combat. The lane was so little frequented that now and again a gorgeous redbird flashed through the budding foliage of roadside trees. A tiny indigo bird hopped along the post-and-rail fence, a few paces ahead of the old flea-bitten horse.

"Seems as if that feller wanted to show us the way," Mr. Stites, the driver, observed, facetiously.

Marian smiled appreciation; but a human voice had broken the spell, and with an upward jerk the bird had vanished in mid-air.

A turn of the road brought the avenue of Halstead in sight. "If that isn't old Nimrod!" Marian exclaimed. Sitting erect by the unpainted gate-posts, an Irish setter mounted guard, with upraised chin and long nose pointing down the road.

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"Yes," Mr. Stites drawled. "Seems he's here every evening since you left. Comes along right at train-time and watches out." As they drew nearer, the old dog stood up stiffly, wagging a doubtful tail and sniffing wistfully towards the approaching wagon. He looked like a person who has known many disappointments. "Yes, comical of him, ain't it?" Mr. Stites went on. "When I pass and he sees you're not come home yet, he just drops his head and tail and stumps up the avenue slow, like he felt real bad ; but the next day he's there again, right enough."

"Do let me out at the gate." Marian caught her breath a little. "I'll walk up with him to-night. You can take my bag on to the house, please. Here is your money." As the hack stopped, Nimrod stood gently tramping with his forefeet ; the long sweep of tail had shortened to a nervous quiver. He was not going to let himself believe in such happiness till Marian's return was beyond possibility of mistake ; but when she had once alighted and laid a caressing hand on his fine old head, he raised a quavering voice

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in one unrestrainable bay of purest joy, and circled about her, jumping with effort, rubbing against her skirt, and thrusting his whitened muzzle into her hand. The hack passed on, Marian and Nimrod walked at a leisurely pace up an avenue winding between two great walls of blue-green Norway spruce. Abruptly, Marian left the driveway, pushing through spreading lower branches into a soft grassy pasture which once had been well-kept lawn. Here she sank down on to the ground, old Nimrod close beside her. Putting her arms about him, she buried her face against his silky auburn fur. Till now she had been dry-eyed; but the sweetness of spring-time, this lonely home-coming, and Nimrod, dear old Nimrod, had broken down her self-control. Clinging to the dog, Marian cried till she felt sick and weary, and still hot, bitter tears poured down her cheeks. Grave and sympathetic, Nimrod refrained from all movement or demonstration, not even tempted by the tantalizing sight of a half-grown rabbit which hopped through the lengthening grass to within a few yards of Marian's feet. The little creature's foolish

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eyes fastened an unmeaning stare upon the old setter till his moist nose puckered and twitched with restrained longing. Mr. Stites's homeward-bound wheels creaking along the avenue started the white cotton-tail for shelter in swift, panicky leaps, and aroused Marian from a painful revery. She stood up, trembling and shattered. All at once the future had put on a frightening aspect; but a more immediate concern was to conceal the state of her tear-ravaged face from Willy, the friendly negro maid. Nimrod stalked sedately at her side, seeming to realize a need of incurious sympathy. The spruce-bordered avenue debouched on a circular sweep, showing half-obliterated traces of fragrant tan. A first sight of the long, stuccoed house, once tinted with a faint pink wash, now faded to an indescribable mellow hue, brought fresh tears to Marian's eyes. The building itself turned a gable end to the avenue; the real front, with wide doorway and high-columned, brick-floored piazza, faced Halstead Creek. Beyond this porch the land dropped away abruptly, leaving just enough level ground between the grassy knoll and the



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creek for an overgrown and wholly delightful flower-garden. The stream itself, clear and brown, scented but not clouded from cedar swamps miles above, was dammed near the house to furnish power for the quietest of grist-mills. This mill necessitated a race half hidden in verdure, a pond, a creamy waterfall. Through the trees there was a glimpse of a sway-backed saw-mill. Below the house the creek wound out of sight through a tunnel of overhanging trees. Here Marian had been happy, and now—— But Willy, smiling and bandannaed, stood ready to receive her. The girl put a handkerchief to her face.

“Anything wrong with yo’ eyes, Miss Marian?” Willy was full of solicitude.

“Why, yes, thank you,—bad cinder. It’s out, but they are still red. Bring up some hot water, please; bathing will make them all right.” Nimrod followed up-stairs close at Marian’s heels. The girl looked about her at the familiar room, ample and bare, with high four-post mahogany bed and clean old dimity curtains with knotted cotton fringe. Here she had been happy; here

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she was to be unhappy ! At least there was the comfort of loneliness, of being able to fight her fight undisturbed. She did not mean to go under, but to recover and begin life afresh. For this, however, she must have quiet. A batch of letters lay on her bureau,—one from a girl friend, one from a soldier-cousin at a far-off post ; those could wait. One only demanded immediate attention : it was in an unfamiliar hand, neat and clear, not to be classified as man's or woman's. Opening this unexpectantly, she read—— Oh, why should the Fates pursue her ! By what merciless freak of fancy, by what inspired inappropriateness did Violet Dunham want her to be bridesmaid ? She could not, she could not,—that was all ! It would tax her to the utmost to see the wedding, which of course was unavoidable. It would take her every minute from now till then to come sufficiently in hand to pass that ordeal with credit. But to go back to town now and bother over clothes, enduring the misery of being with Violet, of seeing all her preparations ! The odiousness of rehearsals, and then—the expense ! Violet

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wrote: "The dresses are perfectly simple. Madame Rose will design them herself. Nile-green Liberty satin under white silk mulle, with fine tucks. Hats to match, with one long ostrich-plume, and, instead of bouquets, a closed parasol made of sweet-peas." Marian fairly shuddered. To a dark, pale woman, the idea of herself in Nile-green was a gratuitous horror. To a person with an odd knack of seeing things intrinsically, not through the medium of usage, a closed parasol of sweet-peas seemed the last possible touch of grotesque vulgarity. And then the cost! A suitable wedding-present had seriously encroached on her slender stock of ready money. Marian was lucky in possessing a small income from her mother, since amateur farming of a spasmodic and poetically experimental nature swallowed up all Mr. Genge's available resources, and his habit of affably ignoring unpaid bills had bred in his daughter a wholesome dislike to debt. No one could be bridesmaid without means to pay for one of Madame Rose's simple mulle-and-satin costumes; so, temporarily dismissing the

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question, she bathed her eyes into some semblance of presentableness and went slowly down-stairs to the evening meal.

Mr. Genge had just come in from a day's fishing. "Supper will be ready soon," he said, kissing her. "I brought a fine string of trout,—enough for to-night and to-morrow. Willy's preparing some now." Mr. Genge was a cheerful, happy, totally irresponsible person, good-looking, spare, active for his age, invincibly well dressed, and perfectly satisfied with his conduct of affairs.

"I'm so glad you had a nice day." Marian was looking at the room with a new interest. She was slowly learning that hitherto she had regarded it as a temporary abode. Since it was now to be permanent, she felt a certain solace in the harmony of those well-proportioned, low-ceilinged rooms, with their abundance of fine old furniture,—a little shabby, perhaps, as to varnish and covering, but with an undeniable air of comfort and distinction.

"So Orth is going to be married." Mr. Genge never shirked the duty of making pleasant conversation. "Do you know,

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Marian, I always thought he was rather after you ?”

“ Oh, dear, no !” Marian spoke with an ease that amazed herself ; she felt that among other things the truth was departing from her. “ Why, he and Violet insist on my being bridesmaid.”

“ Well, I am just as pleased to be mistaken. He is a queer Dick.” Mr. Genge had detected in Killian a desire to modernize certain features of the mills and farm, to suggest changes which would involve much thought and labor on the part of their contented owner. “ I hope those fellows put in the peas I ordered to-day,” he went on. “ We shan’t have any second crop if it is not done soon ; and unless you watch everything yourself nothing is attended to.” Without definitely formulating it, Mr. Genge apparently felt an inward conviction that any reasonably appreciative neighborhood would have found means to relieve him of the strain of spring planting. As the season advanced, his conversation betrayed the same mental attitude towards summer cultivation and autumn harvest. But as no grievance, how-

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ever just, had power to make him sulky or uncompanionable, he proceeded to show a mild parental interest in Marian's affairs. "So you are to be bridesmaid ; that sounds pleasant. When is the wedding?"

"In June,—the 6th. But I shall have to go back to town before then to see about my dress. It is a Nile green. Shan't I look horrid?"

"Well, I suppose the other girls are only meant as a foil for the bride," he suggested, consolingly ; "but it's possible you might be rather distinguished in green."

Marian lay awake half the night, tormented between a real pain and the sordid perplexity of raising money enough for Madame Rose's little bill. There was not a salable article of any value in her possession. The furniture belonged to Mr. Genge, whose pride would never bear disposing of a family piece to dealer or amateur. For the first time in her life Marian chafed against poverty. Without money it was difficult decently to protect the most private feelings. All reluctance to appearing as bridesmaid had entirely given way to the greater dread of offering a clue

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to her feelings by refusing. It was impossible frankly to tell Violet that the cost prevented her accepting. And what other plausible excuse could she find? Marian was not accustomed to being unhappy. All the next day she felt like a well and active person suddenly incommoded by the loss of a faculty. After an absence it was always her habit to inspect the house and garden with a fresh delight, to see what changes the advancing season might have brought. To-day she unpacked her trunk soberly, discussed certain domestic matters with Willy, but had never a glance for the sunny world without. Then she drifted to the piano. This had been a wedding-present to her mother,—a concert grand, made before improved machines had created the beautiful, ephemeral instruments of to-day. Age had perhaps thinned the tone but not impaired its sweetness. In spite of an occasional rattle and vibration, Marian loved its quality ; there was compensation in the mere yellow ivory keys over which her slim fingers skimmed so lightly. Romola's gibe, "playing Chopin to young men in the dusk," exactly described Marian's



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habit, except that she played in the dusk for her own pleasure, whether the young men were present or not. Mrs. Genge had been the gifted pupil of a certain German musician who brought to America the traditions of his master, Chopin. Before her death, while Marian was still a mere child, the young mother had appreciated and developed the girl's talent, passing on to her in some delicate fashion the style and spirit of her own playing. Marian had never thought of putting this to use, it was simply a charming accomplishment ; something spontaneous and effortless, but quite without practical value.

Playing the Nocturnes of Chopin is not a steadying occupation for a person whose eyes display an annoying tendency to fill and brim over. Marian closed the piano, and decided to visit the barn, where, amid a litter of untidy stalls, shabby carriages, carts, and farm-implements, thrown together indiscriminately, she had contrived to keep one well-conditioned stall for her bay mare, Kate. Some years ago a country neighbor, weeding out his racing stable, had given her a sickly colt which showed no promise of speed or beauty.

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Marian nursed and watched the leggy, unpromising creature till it unexpectedly developed into a spirited and delightful saddle-horse. Picking her way over the dirty barn floor, with Nimrod stepping short at her heels, Marian slipped into the stall beside Kate and answered the mare's soft whinnies with gifts of sugar and flattenings of the velvety, wrinkling nose. "It's a shame you are mewed up this nice day. Come along, old lady." Loosening the halter, she called Kate to follow. "Take care, now; don't be trodden on, Nimrod," she cautioned, as both animals seemed disposed to claim the privilege of walking close behind her.

Crossing the barn-yard, she was met by Willy. "Mr. Leighton's at the house, Missy. Yo'll find him on the gallery."

\* \* \* \* \*

Leaning against a column, Archie awaited Marian in that mood of suspense which always preceded their interviews. Although very truly in love and full of impatience, the young man had by no means lost his head to the point of forcing her to receive his addresses while she obviously

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showed no responsive feeling. Killian's engagement, moreover, had given him a sense of temporary security,—his reading of their relation being that Marian must have refused this possible rival, or made plain to him the uselessness of asking her. That any grown man could deliberately prefer Violet had never even crossed Archie's mind. Consequently, the engagement comfortably proclaimed that Marian's sentiment for Killian had merely been such pleasant friendship as happily flourished between himself and Violet Dunham's boyish, warm-hearted sister. Hence he awaited her coming in good hope, even wondering if this soft spring afternoon might not be the day,—the day for which he had so long planned.

"Mr. Leighton!" Marian had come upon him unawares, her foot-fall muffled by thick, unmown grass. Kate's mischievous nose mumbled at her mistress's smooth coils of hair. "Do you mind walking over to the field? No one has given poor Kate a breath of air." She laid a restraining hand on the silky mane. Nimrod left her side to sniff at Archie, wagging and whimpering a welcome.

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"The mare seems fit." Archie would have preferred telling Marian that she herself looked pale.

"I fancy she will be a handful for a day or so, after standing a whole fortnight." Marian was glad to see Archie. His uncomplicated manliness and frank enjoyment of her society made him a most welcome companion in this present mood of doubt and self-depreciation.

No chance for me to-day, the young man decided. His love for her had refined every faculty till he appreciated to a nicety the degree of friendliness or remoteness that underlay her gentle manner. He perfectly realized that Marian was hard to win. Either she would care, or she would not. There would be no gradations. He believed that no other woman was capable of giving what she could give to the right person. But it must be that or nothing. To-day, most emphatically, it was nothing; and Archie resolutely controlled a desire to pour out what he had to say, to force her to listen, if only for the relief of putting it into words. Instead of this he spoke with complete good temper of an ap-

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proaching show. "Have you entered Kate?" he asked. "She'd have a chance in the ladies' saddle-horse class."

Marian shook her head. "I've no groom, and she so hates being handled by strangers."

"If it is only that, and you care for her to go, I have a careful man." It was seldom that Archie ventured to offer a service.

"No, I really don't feel like sending her. Thank you all the same. This is the best time for riding, too——" Marian stopped, struck by a sudden idea. "I'm not sure, either. What are the prizes?"

"Silver brushes." The young man's voice expressed dissent. "I wanted them to have a good saddle; but they were set on silver, made to order and engraved with a picture of the pavilion. The worst looking stuff!"

"I don't think Kate will compete." There was a note of disappointment in Marian's tone.

"By the way,"—Archie had no clue to her feelings, but hastened to change the subject,—“perhaps you might know. Jane Dunham asked me to find her a mount. She only wants to hire one for the summer. Her

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own went tender, and the family advised her to sell him. You ought to have seen how hot she was about it. Jane's not a bit sentimental," said the unconscious Archie, "but she has no end of feeling, though she doesn't like showing it. She just sputtered. 'Sell my horse because he's lame! I'd sooner knock him on the head myself and walk all the rest of my life!' She is not as pretty as Violet, but she's worth as many of her as you could stand between here and New York," he concluded, judicially.

"I liked her." Marian's tone was cordial.

"She liked you, too, a lot." Archie flushed at the recollection of his confidence to Jane. Pulling himself up on the brink of further indiscretion, he went on, "She watched that horse herself. The vet said it was navicular; but she decided on flint, and had him fired. Now it's all right; but he's to be turned out for the summer to get thoroughly well, and she wants a decent beast to carry her for three months or so."

They had reached a flat pasture meadow. Archie let down the bars, and when Kate had frisked in they stood by the fence watch-

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ing her crop mouthfuls of juicy new grass. Occasionally she flung up her head and, with distended nostrils and streaming tail, trotted energetically for a few hundred feet, then stopped as abruptly and resumed her grazing. Nimrod had stretched himself out at their feet, with dim old eyes turned constantly towards his mistress. Marian was silent a long minute. "Would Kate suit?" she finally asked.

Archie pondered; then, rather by sheer force of affection than through reasoning, he understood. Although she never struck him as needing anything, this could only mean Marian's lacking money. It was tantalizing that, with all that any one could possibly want, he did not dare offer her so much as the smallest loan. "Miss Genge," he began, slowly, "we are good enough friends to speak frankly, aren't we?"

Marian's eyes were certainly very friendly, but she shook her head. "No need for you to speak,—it is perfectly simple. I want some money, and there could not be an easier, lazier way of getting it."

Archie poked his cane into the tender sod



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till it made a whole row of little round indentations. He felt that this was not a propitious moment for asking a very elusive lady to share a superfluity of which she stood in obvious need. "If Kate is for hire, I'll take her myself," he presently observed.

Marian's smile grew suddenly tremulous. "No, I don't want it that badly; besides, there is no hardship in letting such a girl have even my precious Kate. But there is one thing you can do," she added, seeing his evident chagrin. "Find out if Miss Dunham will really take her, and put it through for me."

## V

### The Function of Oswald Eric

“**Y**OU mean to say she is going to let some stranger have her own mare?” Jane Dunham’s voice implied a dread of being obliged, unwillingly, to readjust her opinion of Miss Genge.

She and Archie were roosting on the arms of chairs in an overful library, where innumerable long stationer’s boxes of addressed envelopes, piled on every available level space, testified to the extent of Mrs. Dunham’s visiting-list. Jane had entirely ceased to comment upon Violet’s preparation. Vixen’s sufferings ended in her cynically making friends with the cook, although this necessitated a complete change of manner towards cats; but even such an effort was less repulsive to a self-respecting fox-terrier than putting up with the lack of consideration shown her above-stairs. Mr. Dunham’s “business” kept him later and later

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at the office ; indeed, it finally necessitated his absenting himself from home for some days. The coincidence of this unusual event with the executors' sale in New York of a certain well-known collection, would have appeared quite without significance to his family, had they even chanced to hear of it.

"The whole house like this?" Archie asked, fingering an unlighted cigarette.

"Matches on the mantel-piece." Consideration for his feelings prevented Jane's pressing the subject of Marian.

"All right to smoke here?" The young man looked doubtfully at the invitations. "Won't hurt those?"

"Papa does. Fifteen and a half, did you say?"

"As far as you can tell by the eye. I haven't measured her. Good height for you. Might be nearer sixteen, but she doesn't look it." Archie lit his cigarette and blew a few rings of smoke in silence. Watching him, Jane almost forgot the bay mare, Kate, in satisfaction at his fresh, good looks, set off by beautiful new gray clothes, immaculate white waistcoat, and large pink carnation.

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Archie possessed the faculty of indulging in masculine gorgeousness without ever seeming dressed up or looking as if his costume had cost a moment's thought. It was as much a matter-of-course as the cold morning bath and general care of his healthy, active body. Now that she knew how he felt about Marian, Jane could at least let herself go and admire him to her heart's content. Before she had always been holding herself in check. Without reasoning it out, her queer code would have made it quite impossible that she should ever be the one to begin—"anything." Now that there would never be "anything," she could look upon him with unstinted approval. A good loser, Jane never dreamt of giving way to depression, nor did she bear the slightest resentment towards Marian Genge; but as an abstract matter of horse, it was a disappointment that this fortunate lady should fall so far below her own standard of behavior.

"You've explained to her,—it's for all summer,—to be sent to Maine?" Her voice sounded a vague note of criticism.

"That's all right; but she wants you to try

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the mare's gaits before you decide." Archie was pulling the waxed ends of his impertinent moustache.

Jane answered without enthusiasm. "She wrote me to come and spend Sunday. I don't know about going."

"I wish you would." Archie hesitated. "Look here, Jane, I wish you would,—there's a good fellow. I know what's bothering you. You think it looks as if she didn't care, letting any one have Kate ; but, I give you my word, she's a good reason. I can't tell you what it is,—but I expect——" He paused in uncertainty, then decided to let Jane have it all. "The day she told me, she looked as if she might have cried half the night."

"Does she cry?" This was a new idea to Jane. Marian Genge, who lived in the country and was adored by Archie Leighton, had seemed to her an altogether enviable person. Jane herself never cried, nor did Marian seem a person prone to tears. A dozen questions sprang to her mind, but Archie had said he couldn't tell ; and by that secret code of hers there would be meanness in even hazarding a guess.

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Archie, however, volunteered. "She looked awfully played out ; but it would never do to ask her what was wrong. Marian doesn't make you feel that she's reserved ; but, really, she never says a thing about herself."

"I'll go down next Sunday,—Saturday afternoon, I mean. She says I can use her saddle." Jane did nothing by halves.

"Yes ; she wants you to take it. It's fitted to Kate's high withers." Archie was looking much relieved.

"Anybody else there?" Having decided to go, Jane at once felt an interest in the proposed visit.

"Old Mr. Genge !" Archie's tone was uncomplimentary.

"Any good?" Jane expected little from fathers.

"Not much account. One of those talky old men. Never has done a turn of anything in his life, and is too old to learn now. Makes a bluff at two or three things, and reads French novels. Vixen has a better notion of farming. He's bone lazy." Archie had not been so intolerant of Mr. Genge's easy dilettanteism till he lately realized its unpleas-

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ant consequences. "Oh!" He suddenly remembered. "Miss West is there now, too."

"Miss West! Cousin Romola! Does Miss Genge like her? She is always so cross."

Archie nodded. "She's not bad, though. I think things must have gone wrong with her. When you get her to believe you're not a haughty billionaire, dining every day off the brains of your betters, she thaws a good bit. At first she used to snub me like four o'clock. Don't you remember?"

Jane's reminiscent smile gave way to complete seriousness. "This seems a pretty low thing to say; but that miniature woman told Violet, and Violet just thinks it's funny." Time was not far distant when Jane herself had been capable of viewing sentimental mishaps in the light of a joke. "Miss Mallard said that when Cousin Romola painted Killian, she——" Loyalty of sex made this hard for Jane to finish.

"Good Lord! That's a rum go!" Archie had the saving gift of understanding the unspoken word.

"I suppose"—Jane was all tolerance—



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"that's why she is so down on Violet and me whenever we see her. She'll scold all the time I'm there,—poor little thing! Anyhow, Miss Genge won't let her bite me."

Contrary to expectation, when Jane appeared at Halstead, on Saturday afternoon, Romola showed no symptom of disfavor. When the girl came in, hot and flushed from trying Kate's paces, the little painter was ensconced on the porch, peering intently at the mill-dam.

"Marian's busy in-doors. She'll be here soon." Romola transferred her glance to Jane with disconcerting suddenness.

"I'd like to sit under that." The girl nodded towards the creamy waterfall.

"Do you know," Romola had been steadily staring, "in that habit, just a trifle exaggerated, with a common face instead of yours, you would make what the newspapers call 'an ideal' poster for the 'Sporting Duchess.'"

"Why shouldn't they say 'ideal'?" Jane fell in good humoredly with Romola's tone of frank comment.

"Only because it's a decent word with a

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real meaning,—and after it's been associated with ideal cockroach powders and ideal corn-plasters and the like, it's hardly fit for its own work."

"I suspect I don't use it rightly," said Jane, rather penitently.

"My young cousin,"—Romola was quite dispassionate,—"your language is compounded of the ring, the stable, and the gutter; but I've a notion that you talk in that way just as you wear gloves an inch thick, and shoes like monitors with outriggers, and dreadful stockings. It's a protest against missishness and affectation,—but it's not really natural. If you're much with Marian Genge, you'll have a chance of seeing that a woman can ride a horse, and saddle it, too, without otherwise resembling a jockey or a prize-fighter."

"Do you mean these?" Jane's short habit revealed wonderful black and purple stripes.

Romola nodded. "Just think about them. You're very well built,—broad shoulders, good, straight lines, though you're so loosely put together; and of course you can stand

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it better than a stocky girl,—but it isn't really pretty."

"I hate fussy clothes so." Jane was rather gratified at Romola's interest.

"I understand that." The older woman paused. "I don't want to make you hate Marian by quoting."

"Go on. I won't hate her." Jane's sincerity was obvious.

"Well, she's never fussy. Her clothes never interfere with what she's doing. And goodness knows she has little enough to spend on them. Yet they aren't mannish. You see what I mean?"

"Yes." Jane grew meditative. Miss West's hint suggested a solution to the mystery of Kate. The girl felt sudden remorse. This other girl wanted money, had to have it, and she, because of a full purse, was to ride away on Marian's horse. A really poor person of her own class was a revelation. She had heard people talk of not being able to afford a yacht or a pearl necklace, but wanting a hundred dollars was almost as remote from her experience as being pushed for stamps or car-fare.

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When Marian joined them, Nimrod as ever at her heels, Jane stole covert glances at her hostess's pretty brown linen frock. It was fresh, but evidently far from new. Only grace of outline and extreme personal elegance prevented her looking shabby.

"Why, the mare is thoroughbred, Miss Genge. She has speed and gait. I never rode such a horse. It's awfully good of you to let me have her."

Jane was a little embarrassed, but Marian answered with perfect naturalness. "Isn't she a nice beast? And it's a pleasure to see you on her,—you're so square, I've no fear for her back."

"No; I don't often touch a horse," Jane admitted.

"It's a trait of the Genges to ride thoroughbreds," Romola elucidated. "Mr. Genge always prefers them for ploughing, too,—they are so much more intelligent,—and Marian is full of the same careful spirit. She wears real lace because she can't afford Hamburg edging, and——"

"What have you done with Romola, Miss

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Dunham?" Marian broke in. "She generally sides with me."

"I wish you would call me Jane." The girl was blunt from shyness. "My name is really Gladys,—but the other was put in for some old aunt. When I was thirteen I found it out,—no one had ever told me. Then we had an awful fight. The family wouldn't call me Jane, and I couldn't stand the other; it was altogether too fancy. At first they punished me, then they tried bribery. Some one would suddenly say, 'Here's a box of candy, Gladys!' You have no idea how hard it was not to forget and answer. They had to give in, though."

"Our family have a sweet taste in names." Romola showed unwonted benevolence. "What a horrid child they all thought you! I suppose you go on giving them a different sort of trouble, now you are grown up. Why can't you be like your sister?"

Jane considered it out of taste in Romola to touch Violet with her sarcasm, and, instead of answering, squatted flexibly on her heels to meet the advances of Nimrod, who had been inspecting the new-comer from behind the

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folds of Marian's skirt. He now sedately approached and subjected Jane's knees to the politest sniffings, while she responded with highly sympathetic manipulation of silky ears and pendulous dewlap.

"How good he smells!" she remarked. "Not a bit doggy. How do you manage it, Miss Genge?"

"If I call you Jane, you might call me Marian, unless you think I'm too old."

"Too old! I'd simply love it." Jane flushed with pleasure and redoubled her attentions to Nimrod, whose eyelids drooped in ecstasy.

"It's swimming in Halstead Creek; isn't it, old man?" The old dog's eyes opened at the sound of Marian's voice. "Our water is scented with cedar. If it is this warm to-morrow we might take a dip, too. Over by the saw-mill there is a quiet backwater,—deep enough to dive."

It was hard for Jane to accept the idea of Marian's poverty. There was plenty to eat, and of the best. The large, airy rooms, the impressive four-post beds, with their fragrant linen and spotless dimity hangings, to her

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taste, were infinitely more luxurious than the overladen city house to which she was accustomed; yet she could not help noticing the extreme shabbiness of two bathing-suits which her hostess produced on the following day. Neither she nor Violet would have ventured to offer a maid anything so dilapidated. Marian, however, seemed perfectly unabashed; warned her against certain weak places without offering the slightest apology. A mid-day meal of Sabbath solidity, combined with soft country air and much exercise, reduced Jane to a hopeless condition of drowsiness, and with reluctance she obeyed Romola's orders and flung herself on the bed, meaning just to close her eyes for a few minutes. She was roused by Marian knocking, and sat up, bewildered and quite astray as to her whereabouts.

"You've slept long enough,"—Marian was laughing,—"and there's company downstairs."

Jane lay back helpless. "No use. I can't wake up."

"The young man will blame me," Marian pleaded. "He has ridden all the way from



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Merton to meet you. He's a particular friend of mine, and you would like to look at his horse."

Jane sat up on the edge of the bed, gazing meditatively at her shoes. The effort of putting them on seemed more than she could bear.

"He has trouble with his name, too. It's Oswald Eric Judd,—and there's nothing to do about that." Marian's eyes showed amusement. "But I think he minds the Judd most. He's a nice boy, but needs a little—a little—— You will see. He is by way of being very artistic just now. You could do a lot for him, if you would be willing to put up with his hair."

"Has he a beard?" Jane was reserving judgment.

"Oh, I wouldn't ask that much of you." Marian's voice sounded fairly reproachful. "He did have one; but I told him he would look like Endymion without it. He's very easily influenced. And it's true, too. But I mustn't stop gossiping here,—he may be ground to powder. Romola and Mr. Leighton can't bear him."

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“Archie there, too?” Jane at once decided that the part of friendship was to occupy the romantic Judd boy for the rest of the afternoon, letting Archie have an innings with Marian. She felt sure of Romola’s aid ; but on reaching the porch she found the two young men entertaining each other. Archie was leaning against one of the tall columns, smoking and looking out at the water, less apparently to enjoy its beauties than to avoid resting his eyes on an obnoxious object. His straight back was directly turned to Oswald Eric Judd, who sat in a rocking-chair, gently swaying to and fro as he pleasantly descanted on the joys of a literary life. Even a correct riding-costume could not quite efface this young man’s resemblance to a tolerably successful imitation of an archangel ! He was tall and well-made, baring a trifle too marked flexibility and slenderness of neck and finger. His clustering curls of rich brown, though short for a Florentine page, were still of a length not usually associated with baggy breeches and high tan riding-boots. Soft, lustrous brown eyes, long-lashed, looked from under a wonderful arch

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of pencilled eyebrows. His delicate nose and mouth suggested the romantic actor of a past generation, and he had a perfectly unassumed tendency to fall into picturesque attitudes. Jane felt it lucky that Marian joined her on the threshold. Only the pressure of a reassuring hand on her arm enabled the young girl to confront this apparition composedly ; but she found herself quite unequal to carrying out her benevolent intentions towards Archie. Imagination and experience alike failed to suggest possible ground of meeting so unaccountable a creature. After expressing much pleasure at making her acquaintance, Mr. Judd, however, seemed entirely disposed for general conversation, in which he was perversely abetted by Marian's interested smile.

"Don't you agree with me, Mr. Leighton," he asked, "that in deciding to follow any branch of art, the life is the main thing, making your work and your pleasure the same? Stevenson says——"

Out of deference to the presence of Jane and Marian, Archie had been obliged to turn and face this annoyance, whose weakly,

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handsome appearance acted on his nerves exactly as the sight of the kitchen cat on Vixen's. "Going in for newspaper work?" he interrupted, shortly.

"Newspaper work!" Oswald's sensitive lips quivered at the bare thought. "The mill in which all originality, all ideas are ground to a distressful level of mediocrity!"

"Well!" Archie was conscious of behaving badly; but, then, what the fellow really needed was kicking. "Don't you have to be ground somehow,—some edge put on you?"

Oswald's serene self-appreciation prevented his being in the least touchy; besides, the Gospel of Love had lately attracted his favorable notice, consequently he pursued, with unruffled sweetness, "I've been thinking of a course at that wonderful place where the book is really created; where the spirit, the style, and the mere mechanism of making are treated as an indivisible trinity,—all worthy a man's best effort."

Archie's expression was becoming so resolute that Marian felt it time to interfere. "Mr. Leighton," she suggested, "I've a notion that Romola could be found in the boat.

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She's fond of lurking in some sheltered nook. Why don't you overtake her and row a mile or so down-stream? Miss Dunham hasn't half seen the creek."

When Jane and Archie discovered Miss West, and invited her to take them on board, the painter professed to be tired of blossoms and budding leaves. "No," she asserted, "I'll leave you the boat. All this springiness diverts my mind from business. It's the season for making Christmas-magazine covers, and I'm obliged to concentrate on turkeys and mistletoe. It's all right for you to enjoy a generally sappy state of things, but I had better spend the rest of the afternoon in the field with Roger. He's decorative enough now,—though of course gobblers won't be in full feather till autumn."

"Aren't you afraid of him?" Archie asked. "He's the worst-tempered thing on two legs that I have ever run across."

"Now, really,"—Romola seemed unusually urbane,—"I thought you reserved that distinction for me."

"Let me row," Archie remonstrated, as Jane began handling the oars in a masterly

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fashion. "I need some exercise. That fellow's d——d Christian-science talk made me sick."

"I wouldn't get so hot about it, if I were you," Jane counselled, sagely, as she obediently passed him over the oars. "Miss Genge knows just what he is ; but she thinks she can make a man of him."

For awhile Archie rowed in silence, the girl skilfully steering around projecting curves and sunken trees. Overhead young leaves hardly excluded the tender afternoon sunlight. Bushes of starry marsh azalea balanced above the clear brown water, drenching the air with stifling fragrance. Now and again a shining black turtle slid from a log into the stream, making wide circles on its tranquil surface. Archie had almost stopped rowing. The imperceptible current and an occasional strong, slow pull sufficed to keep them in gentle motion. The blue and white of a kingfisher flashed from a thicket, splashed along the water, and vanished. Little, impertinent redstarts made queer perpendicular darts through the boughs of an overhanging maple. High in the air

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came the evening song of wrens and robins. The thrush's luscious recurrent phrase was followed by the flagrant plagiarism of a cat-bird. As they drifted, strange sensations beset Jane,—an odd warmth about the eyes, unaccountably connected with an aching, heavy heart. Every time she looked at Archie the song of the birds grew less bearable. Then an idea suggested itself quite apart from any volition of hers. She repudiated it as base, disloyal, intolerably and cruelly selfish. It persisted, more plausible, affording inexpressible comfort. All women, she reflected,—that is, all women whom men admire,—have certain traits in common. Jane gazed her fill at Archie, ruefully aware that even should their eyes chance to meet he was safe to see nothing. The more she looked, the less comprehensible it seemed; but, according to every rule of the game, as she knew it, this afternoon's events could only mean that Marian was pursuing perfectly usual and accepted tactics in employing Mr. Oswald Eric Judd as a buffer against the attentions of Archie Leighton.

If she really doesn't want him, thought Jane.



## VI

### A Crumb from Violet's Table

"**I** DIDN'T catch the young lady's name," Oswald observed, in a tone of luke-warm interest, when he and Marian found themselves in undisturbed possession of the porch; "but it's easy to tell that she and Leighton are brother and sister. I never saw a more striking likeness."

"How curious!" Marian was lying back on an unpainted sea-chair, exhibiting the prettiest possible feet incased in irreproachable high-heeled slippers. "Now that you speak of it, I see the resemblance,—though, as a matter of fact, they are no relation."

"Mere similarity of type." Oswald disposed of the subject with a too ornate wave of the hand. "I came for your advice about my den. I can't exist another month in such a shriekingly Philistine environment. But when you come to crystallizing artistic generalizations into one definite expression, there

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is a good deal of difficulty in deciding certain points. Now, take this dear old place of yours. It has grown through generations ; but our house, like everything at Merton, is appallingly new."

Marian really was not listening. One charm of Oswald's society was that, while apparently consulting her at every point, he actually made not the slightest demand upon her attention. Perfectly self-sufficient, he only needed a sense of sympathy and understanding to monologue along for hours in his nicely modulated voice. His varying diction, modified by the writer of his temporary enthusiasm,—now Pater, now Ruskin,—was a mild source of amusement to the girl,—an amusement in which she indulged without fear of complications. Safety ! In that lay the real ground of her tolerance for the absurdities of Mr. Judd. She throve best in an atmosphere of admiration ; and his, frank as it was, involved none of the consequences which threatened her pleasant intimacy with Archie. Apart from difference of age, Oswald was far too full of himself to be more than a vaguely adoring plaything.

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She would have liked to let Archie worship her,—to warm herself at the fire he was more than ready to kindle in her honor. He would be a spirited and delightful lover, immeasurably comforting to her sore self-respect. As Oswald prattled on about Byzantine red with arabesques versus Gothic wood-carving and dull browns, she dallied with temptation. Why not raise those barriers she had imposed between herself and Archie. It needed only a glance, only a hint of yielding. If she were to let him walk with her to-night from the porch to the water's edge,—if they were to pause there for a minute,—it would be pleasant enough to trifle awhile in the sweet spring evening, to be hotly adored; but—— Marian's lips curved in a little self-disdainful smile. One could almost always find it easy to say "yes" by moonlight. It was so fitting. She would have done it a dozen times already, to others than Archie, if a trick of the imagination had not ever conjured up a vision of the next day and the day after. She could not cheat herself into believing, even for a moment, that she would enter into any such bond with the intention

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of keeping to it. Such a passage could only be the merest temporary indulgence for which she would have to pay a heavy price ; nor she alone. He also would pay,—pay in disappointed love and trust betrayed. Without a shred of a certain kind of principle, Marian played very fair. She had originally felt no earthly scruple in allowing any acceptable person to make love to her,—that seemed only natural. With some men it was an accomplishment like any other,—an agreeable way of passing time,—a good game for two. After trying this game with a number of adversaries, the girl had learned to dread results. Too often it turned deadly serious, and always she seemed to hold stacked cards. The experiences which followed had ended in weaning her from a contest which invariably proved unequal. It was like gambling for no heavy stakes, and suddenly finding yourself possessed of your opponent's entire substance. With Killian there had been no game, no contest, only the frankest friendship.

“Miss Genge,” Oswald's voice grew less remote, “have you ever read a little thing of Catulle Mendés, called——?”

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This, too, made her think of Killian. He had warned her. "Take care with that boy,—he has the makings of a rotten decadent, an odious degenerate." This was true. Even with Oswald she could not quite rid herself of all responsibility.

"Why not read De Musset instead?" she asked. "We have shelves full of him in there. He is the best of the same thing, without—— There is something so wrong with the modern Frenchman."

"And yet," he objected, "you were quoting one of them yourself the other day when I wanted to make you a sundial for the garden."

Marian's whimsical smile owned defeat. "And there was only one ornament in the world I would put in among my crazy flower-beds. '*Une statue de Flore sans tête, qui sourit encore, c'est ce qu'on ne trouve pas facilement à Paris.*' Dear old Monsieur Bergeret." She mused a minute. "And yet, Oswald, I doubt if it is worth a grown man's while to write whole books of filigree, no matter how enchanting. In some way, intensely personal as they were, the 1840 peo-

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ple dealt with bigger emotions than Anatole France."

"1840." Romola had joined them unobserved, and broke into the conversation with a scornful snort. "Mr. Judd should get to work and read Fielding and Dr. Johnson, night and day, till he has forgotten that there is such a thing as a Frenchman above ground. And you,—you ought to stop reading altogether; drop Chopin and play Bach till the cows come home."

"How about the other arts?" Marian asked, innocently. "Are Puvis and Rodin and the rest to give way to virile Victorians?"

"Mr. Judd,"—Romola entirely ignored this question,—“will you come back to the barn with me? Roger is so very formidable, I don't dare tease him. A big, strong man like you won't be afraid to make him gobble and show off his feathers."

"I'll come, too," Marian suggested.

"No, you can't," Romola snapped. "I saw Mr. Stites's gray nag ambling down the road. There! He is turning into the avenue now. You must stay and entertain

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company. Come along, Mr. Judd, if you don't mind."

"Mind! I'm fond of annoying Roger. He's such a conceited thing."

Oswald was quite unconscious of the dangerous glance Romola cast upon him. She opened her mouth as if to speak, but shut it firmly, and the young man took her unwonted politeness as a proof that this crabbed being was at last growing sensible to his merits. The painter's new freak, however, was entirely puzzling to Marian till Mr. Stites drew up at the door and Killian Orth emerged from the dusty recesses of the wagon. "Poor dear," she thought, remembering the theory of Adela Mallard. "It's pretty bad, when Romola wants to run away——" And then the girl felt every other sensation vanish in unspeakable gladness at the sight of Violet's betrothed."

"Till now I always supposed," he explained, "that engaged people had generally respected privileges,—but it is only responsibilities."

"You mean?" Marian had decided that it now behooved her to forego the pleasure



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of understanding Killian without putting him to the trouble of definite utterance.

"Well, naturally I would spend Sunday afternoon with Violet, after being all this time at Laurelton." He found no difficulty in naming her outright to Marian. To him Marian meant assured comprehension and sympathy, unquestioning discretion. He spoke with regretful admiration. "The poor child is so tremendously conscientious, she will see every one who feels the slightest claim on her. There is no chance of my having her to myself. However, this state of things will soon be over."

"Violet has been good enough to ask me to be one of her bridesmaids ; but of course you know all about it." Marian felt that if the future contained many moments like this, she should be sorely tempted to—to what? What in heaven or earth could put an end to a situation at once so pitiful and so tragic?

Killian had taken her hand in his. "You see, Marian," he was saying with the utmost affection, "of course, my cousin John is to be best man ; but when the time comes

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I shall really feel that you are the person who is putting me through. Isn't it shameful," he added, dropping her hand with a friendly pressure, "for a man fairly to quail while a slip of a girl takes the whole business,—the spectacle, I mean,—as if it were the easiest thing possible?" His brow puckered in comical appreciation of his own predicament. "Think how afraid I am of the other girls and the strange young men,—all looking on me as an elderly outsider. If it weren't for you, I'd be regularly scared."

Marian achieved a perfectly natural laugh. "Really, Killian, I don't know you. You never used to be self-conscious and bother about what impression you were making."

"No." He drew a sigh of relief at the idea. "When that part is well over, I'm not likely to think much of my audience, if as the time goes on I can only make her happy."

"I really believe," Marian reflected, "that much of this will cure me. Apparently, the most interesting men grow tame as soon as the toils of matrimony——"

He again took her hand. "You ought to

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marry, too, Marian," he said, with serious tenderness. "You are too——"

"I will," she answered, with sudden flippancy, "the minute I find a man I like better than you." Leaving her passive hand in his, Marian gave way to a fanciful notion. If only he had done this sooner, she thought, before his head was full of Violet, the feeling it gave her might have passed straight into him, and then—— Quickly she drew away her hand, remembering with bitterness that in those days he never dreamt of taking such a liberty. "I suppose he never wanted to, or he would have done it," she reflected; "and this is just a part of the expansiveness which comes with happiness. His holding my hand is only a crumb from Violet's table, and I wish to heaven it would choke me."

## VII

### “Our First in Heaven”

AS Marian passed up the aisle, she discovered, to her surprise, that this dreaded day was not appreciably worse than any other. The material horror of Killian's wedding, at least for the time being, drowned all deeper sensations. The Nile-green dress, her hat like ornate confectionery, eight unspeakable parasols of pale sweet-peas, the impossibly short step of the girl with whom she walked, the confusion at the church door, Madam Rose herself in a modiste's tight best dress bustling forward to straighten Violet's train, the array of ushers solemn as gorgeous pall-bearers,—this whole scene became fused into one kaleidoscopic nightmare. Heads bobbed, whispers sibilated, an occasional devout person kneeling struck a note as inappropriate as grace at afternoon tea. The scent of flowers grew oppressive. The organist rose to a fine climax as the bridal proces

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sion stalked slowly up the aisle. Two little fairy girls whisked away a broad white ribbon dividing the general public from important guests. At the chancel steps, with a graceful manœuvre, eight well-drilled bridesmaids separated into lines, forming an effective vista for a beautiful bishop in lawn sleeves, supported by a body of minor clergy. The high voices of white-robed choir-boys soared into a triumphal epithalamium. Marian ventured a glance towards Killian, who, having left his best man holding two hats, had joined Violet at the altar. He looked pale and completely intimidated. Marian's self-confidence was returning, and, instead of enduring the service in a state of torture, she drifted into an abstract analysis of the whole performance. It was a barbarous rite, a relic of those times when every girl was a chattel, given or sold by her male protector to the man of his choice. An exacting ceremonial then served a good purpose. Like the drugs lavished on a suttee victim, all this excitement, this fuss and millinery, had been originally destined to cover any terror or possible revolt of the passive woman. It was a survival, such as

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the buttons on a man's coat-tails, and by some mischance, instead of growing obsolete, it had taken on this added elaboration, which was absurdly superfluous when two people asked nothing better than to be joined together. But if—— The music had sunk to a mere murmur. Violet, with much composure, gave her glove to Jane, who was already holding the huge bridal bouquet in addition to a maid-of-honor's parasol one third larger than any of the others. Killian's voice sounded clear, even a little exalted. "With this ring——" He at least had now forgotten the crowd, and the look he bent on Violet caused Marian to shift her eyes abruptly—anywhere. By chance they lit on Mr. Dunham, much dressed, stodgy, and unimpressive. His functions seemed completely over, and, having done a parent's part, he stood meaninglessly in the chancel, there, as elsewhere, a detached, lonely little figure. The uncontrolled thoughts pricking through Marian's brain suggested how different an appearance her own father would present. He would look as if the ceremony could not possibly proceed without him. By

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no effort of his own, Mr. Genge had an unearned pivotal quality; he also seemed agreeable without really being so. We are much alike, Marian reflected, with new cynicism. She thought that he would certainly look the *rôle* of regretful parent a thousand times better than poor Mr. Dunham. Then there came a flashing vision of herself at the altar—— With whom? It really did not seem to matter.

The organ burst forth through crashing chords into the Mendelssohn March. People in pews swayed like a wind-blown field of grain, straining over one another's shoulders for a glimpse of the wedded pair as they swept down the aisle. Everybody was saying, "Did you ever see her look so perfectly beautiful?" If she should marry, Marian suddenly resolved, it should be exactly like this. If it were what one wanted, if it were right, it could not be too sacredly quiet, but to wall one's self into matrimony as a matter of convenience, the pressure of publicity, even beating of drums, would be a helpful accompaniment! The atmosphere simply killed emotion; she had just passed through the



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worst moment of her life, and because of all this she was scarcely conscious of any hurt.

At the house the scene so precisely reproduced all other wedding receptions that Marian had no sense of its being more to her than any one of a dozen similar entertainments. Elderly ladies took up more than their share of the room. Standing under a canopy of orchids, Violet was continually saying, "Killian, you remember Mrs. —, at whose house we had such a delightful dinner."

The ushers, much relaxed by the termination of their responsibilities, were running to and fro with glasses of champagne. The odor of rich food gradually dominated the scent of roses. Quite unaware of blocking a vitally important doorway, Adela Mallard wept happily over a plate of salmon salad. Mrs. Dunham was rapturously assuring five hundred guests: "Of course, it's a great blow, losing Violet!" Some one fleetingly squeezed Marian's arm. "Our first in heaven!" Jane had whispered in her ear, and passed on to hospitable duties.

Marian noted a big man, who had an air of

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perpetually wearing a frock-coat. His heavy features, as well as his figure, were somewhat thickened by middle-aged portliness, but the light in his small, mole-colored eyes suggested much unexpected vitality. A coarsely intellectual head, with no sign of baldness, was set deep on still powerful shoulders. He stood apart, not seeming to know any one, his imposing bulk making an obstruction on which parties of lesser people split and separated. Loneliness, however, in no way disconcerted him, as he held his ground with a hint of inward amusement on his observant, impassive face. Marian's whole state of mind and feeling had grown so remote that she was staring with frank curiosity, till a sudden glance from his watchful eyes recalled her to consciousness of unwarrantable rudeness. He turned slowly away, and with extraordinary ease cut a path through the crowd. Marian was annoyed with herself. This was evidently a stranger,—some one from the country,—and her persistent gaze had made him conscious of uncomfortable isolation.

“Miss Genge, you have nothing to eat.”  
By dint of much exertion, Archie had con-

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trived to reach her. "Come out on the stairs, and I'll bring you some food."

She shook her head, making herself heard with difficulty. "You've forgotten. The bridal party are to have breakfast in the library. It's all arranged. We sit at a long table, and eat and make speeches to slow music, while the common herd are only allowed to peep in at the door. Mercy! What can be happening?"

The crowd was dividing in search of sheltered corners, like a shoal of mackerel disturbed by the presence of some large, masterful fish. The cause soon revealed itself to be the big stranger making a slow, relentless progress, convoying in his capacious wake Mr. Dunham's insignificant, forgotten figure. The discouraged little gentleman cast a despairing look at Marian. It was never in his province to perform introductions, and on this occasion, to complete his dismay, he could not, for the life of him, remember her name.

"Miss Genge won't be induced to taste your champagne, sir," the resourceful Archie bawled, with an energy which caused

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the worried wrinkles to vanish from Mr. Dunham's forehead.

"Now, that's not right,—not at a wedding." He spoke quite briskly. "But perhaps Judge Borland can persuade you, Miss Genge. May I present him?" Marian smiled pleasantly at the new-comer, who at once seemed to form the nucleus of a group to which she and Archie attached themselves. When she turned to address some politeness to their host, he had vanished.

"I suppose you do this sort of thing all the time?" The Judge spoke tentatively, but his voice was the assured organ of a man accustomed to be listened to, and, though not loud, it was easily heard through the increasing din. His unsmiling speech brought about some inward change which entirely modified a rather forbidding expression. Marian felt that she liked him. He struck her as free from pretence, natural. In spite of a tinge of rusticity, his admirable manner and the sense of latent power both in voice and bearing were infinitely restful.

"Often! Oh, dear, no! I live in the country."

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"Indeed!" The Judge offered no comment. He had thought her extremely urban-looking,—a finished product of social conditions quite new to him. As a prominent upcountry lawyer he had met men of all kinds; but his experience of ladies had been limited to the court-house town where most of his life had been spent, till a recent appointment called him to the city. He had seen enough of Killian in the country for a mutual liking to spring up between them; it hardly amounted to friendship, but was sufficiently strong for Killian to ask that Judge Borland might be included among the wedding-guests.

Archie's considerate presence of mind, which had not escaped the Judge, at once altered his rough estimate of the young man, whom at first sight he had somewhat slightly catalogued as only a dandy. Marian's looks had roused his curiosity from the moment of catching her melancholy eyes resting upon his. At near range he was surprised to find such attraction in what he supposed must be an ugly woman. She bore none of the accepted hall-marks of beauty, yet he felt

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a conviction that in all this swarm of bewildering femininities she was the only one with whom he could comfortably exchange a word. Overdressed middle-aged ladies he did not contemplate as possible associates. A plain farmer's wife in calico and sun-bonnet, yes,—or even the families of his country colleagues,—but these imposing satin-clad beings, with beautifully arranged gray hair and diamonds, rendered him immediately morose and speechless. Marian's voice surprised him. Her dark coloring and this dainty utterance, so different from the mother tongue as he knew it, led him to suppose there must be something foreign about her, till he remembered having on first acquaintance thought the same of Killian.

"Do you know Mr. Leighton?" Marian was asking.

The Judge extended a large, strong hand.

"Borland, from Butler, isn't it?" Archie inquired, cordially, giving the older man the benefit of a muscular grasp.

"Yes,—or used to be. I belong in town now," the Judge answered, mentally noting that this young sprig also spoke the known

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language with unknown cleanness of accent. Probably there were whole sets of people who talked so. If he had children they should certainly learn it ; for himself, at fifty odd a man was too old for new tricks. His mind turned back to his hard-working, country-bred wife, dead these many years. It scarcely seemed fair for him to be enjoying all this novelty while she lay in a little walled church-yard, near the remote village where he had begun to read law, a quarter of a century ago.

A pretty, slim girl detached herself from the passing stream of people. "Mr. Leighton !" Her voice was full of importance and mystery. The two consulted gravely in undertones. She displayed with ostentatious caution a small paper bag, whispering impressively, "If you can come now, I'll show you where to find the rest."

Archie drifted off, with a friendly nod. The older man's glance craved enlightenment.

"Rice," Marian explained. "There are white slippers, too, and white cockades on the horses, and white ribands wound through the spokes."

"I suppose Orth likes it," he remarked.



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"I suppose so." Marian's tone was perfunctory; but something moved her to ask with sudden interest, "I don't know, though. Would you? Tell me. You speak as if this kind of a party were more or less out of your line. How does it strike you?"

For the first time a smile lit his impassive face. It was very full of humor, and confirmed Marian's idea that, for all his apparent simplicity, Judge Borland possessed considerable perception.

"The questions you ask are too hard," he answered. Although the smile was momentary, his eyes still showed amusement. "You must not forget the confusion of a countryman come to town."

"Truly!" She caught his tone of cautious banter. "Now, in my ignorance I had thought that when a country judge was called to the bench here, it might be taken for granted that he would not be wholly unsophisticated."

The Judge met her eye full, then abruptly dropped his guard. "It strikes me as a pretty heavy penalty to pay, even for the sake of what Orth is getting. A man always

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looks like a fool when he is being married; but the more of this business there is——”

At that minute a break in the crowd enabled them to see a middle-aged young woman lavishly kissing Killian.

“Now, that lady,” the Judge asked, “why should she feel entitled——? Because he has just got a wife, does she think it means that he wants to kiss everybody?”

“It’s a queer spectacle.” Marian’s melancholy eyes met his in a glance of interested approval.

“Miss Genge! Miss Genge!” The current now bore Julia Norris into their quiet backwater. “Hasn’t it been a perfect wedding?” She was dressed with the most artfully quiet elaboration, and spoke quite loud, adding, in an undertone, “Though this kind of a mob makes one feel *tant soit peu encaillée*, doesn’t it? You know I am sailing to-morrow. If you come to Paris, do send me word.”

“Marian!” Jane, looking careworn for all her flushed cheeks, slipped a hand through Marian’s arm. “Come straight up-stairs. We are to sit down now.”

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Marian turned to bow a farewell to the Judge.

"But," he remonstrated, "where can I find you again, if you don't live in town?"

"One minute, Jane dear." Marian spoke over her shoulder. "You will be far too busy for visits in the country; but if——"

The whole wedding-party, bound breakfastward, cut ruthlessly into her sentence, and when the throng had swept up-stairs, Marian was no longer in sight.

Looking about him, Judge Borland suddenly found himself in the awkward position of not seeing one familiar face. From the dining-room came an outrageous clatter. In the reception-rooms small groups of girls and men clustered together, intimately chatting and holding plates and glasses at perilous angles. Other plates and glasses, half empty, were appearing in unsuitable places, —on mantel-shelves, under chairs. One large tumbled napkin had been thrust between the legs of a bronze Mercury on the newel-post.

A good time to leave, thought the Judge. But a new difficulty presented itself. During his moment of indecision the staircase had

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become a solid mass of youthful humanity. A very active usher stood on one leg, calling out, "Now, if you move only an inch, Miss Gwendolin, I could find a place for my other foot." The Judge did not fancy trusting his bulk to any such gymnastics ; but his hat was in a dressing-room on the second floor. Looking about for a waiter to send in quest of it, he found himself being keenly inspected by a little woman whose appearance would never otherwise have arrested his notice. Putting down her plate with a quick, impatient gesture, she promptly joined him. "I am Miss West, a cousin of the house," she explained, in a tone which struck him as unfriendly ; "what is it that you want?"

"You are very kind." He was a trifle surprised at the freedom of city manners. "It's my hat."

"You would like to go. Is your name in it?"

"Just B. F. B.," he answered.

"B——? I did not catch the rest," she queried.

"B. F. B." His answer was a little short. But Romola paid no attention, observing, as

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if to herself, "B. F., of course; what else could it possibly be?" Turning to a young man who was hurrying past with a plate of melted ice-cream, she directed him to procure the hat without delay.

"Is that all?" she inquired of the Judge.

"Why, you are very kind to take me under your wing." He smiled down at her. "Perhaps you can tell me something?"

"I like imparting information." Romola's manner of resenting his physical superiority was to imply that he might in many ways benefit by her instructions.

"There is a young lady who lives in the country." He hesitated, becoming suddenly aware that this erratic person was capable of asking what any man of his stripe might have to do with young ladies. Romola's perversity, however, had its limits, and in a flash she deigned to help him out by volunteering, "Halstead Mills. You mean Marian Genge?"

"Miss West!" He turned the name over slowly. "Of course. Now I remember hearing of you. There was a portrait in oils of

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Orth, at Merton. I saw it one night when I dined there. Now your name comes back to me."

"You have a royal memory." At times Romola made a deliberately vicious use of platitudes.

"I suppose you have a specialty for portraits. That was a speaking likeness," he added, trying to find his bearings.

"I hate them," she exploded, with energetic bitterness. "If you painted truly what you saw in most faces, you'd be up before the Grand Jury for libel and blackmail about six times a year. Not that Killian Orth has any shameful traits,—he is really good, through and through,—but he is the very stupidest man—— And all men, except you, of course," she broke off, wickedly, "are so stupid that life is a burden because of them."

This sally fairly puzzled the Judge. "I think you're not quite just to Orth," he remonstrated. "He has shown plenty of force and intelligence up at Laurelton, and he's certainly very well read——" Romola gave him a glance of such impatience that he

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hastened to add. "But perhaps we are not talking of the same thing."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Dear me, Marian," Romola remarked, as the two friends were driving away from the wedding, "I did think the town bad enough already; and now they have let loose that big steam-roller of a country judge, who talks about oil-paintings and says Mr. Orth is well read."

"What are you going to do this afternoon?" Marian's voice showed deep fatigue.

"Why, of course this kind of thing utterly wrecks the whole day. I'm going to put on my worst clothes and take a long walk by myself, down in what you superfine people call the slums. I want to free my lungs from that reek of party food and perfumed people. It will be stinking and filthy down there in this heat; but I must see some real human beings before bedtime, or smother."

"You are perfectly absurd, Romola." Marian spoke tenderly. She grieved for the hurt Romola was striving to hide. "There are plenty of genuine clean people. Look at Jane and Archie. There is nothing imitation



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in them. And I believe you are wrong about the Judge, too. He says oil-painting simply by way of definition. If he attempted to be knowing——”

“Well! It’s lucky you like him so much, —as he meditates paying you a visit.” Romola’s eyes twinkled with malice. “And if he lights on the afternoon of one of Mr. Judd’s private lectures on æsthetics—— But,” she interrupted herself, “it may be a blessing in disguise. Who knows? Your friend the Judge does not look overweighted with compunctions. Now, I often long to step on people whose mere existence offends me; but what’s the use, when I only weigh a hundred and six pounds?”

## VIII

### “The Roscius of Butler County”

ALTHOUGH strolling in the garden with Oswald Eric Judd had ceased to afford Marian the slightest amusement, on a certain mild Sunday afternoon she felt constrained to do so by a dejected suspicion that the world offered no occupation more desirable. During the summer there had come about a gradual readjustment of her whole attitude towards life; a detachment, without pain or bitterness, had replaced the first week of revolt,—but interest in people and things had diminished till time hung weary on her hands. The state of the garden testified to a growing indifference. Long branches of cosmos lay across moss-grown paths; rose-bushes, gone to seed, showed bright-red haws; heliotrope sprawled unpruned; coarse fall grass sprouted among the chrysanthemums. Chickens had scratched at pleasure, to the great detriment of sweet-

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williams and mignonette, while a whole colony of barn cats had made round, nest-like depressions under lavender-bushes and among lily-of-the-valley leaves. In spite of this, the whole effect was rather of unchecked bloom than of squalor or neglect, and Oswald was too enamoured of the old in every phase, excepting always the human, to cavil at obvious signs of deterioration. From the trees overhead, ripe yellow leaves dropped by their own weight, lighting softly on grass and flowers. It was stillest Indian summer ; brilliant swamp-maples balanced above the unruffled brown water, casting a reflection of startling redness. Near things seemed far away, and this fictitious distance was steeped in bluish mist, surrounding the commonest objects with a glamour of loveliness. A hen-coop, a row of beehives, a pile of fallen leaves, all seemed to radiate mysterious beauty. Marian's eye noted this, as of old, but it no longer moved her to happiness or regret, and Oswald's rapture ended by arousing downright irritation. What was the use of it,—this painted charm of death and decay? and why was all the world so alert

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and active over the affairs of life? what did anything matter in the end?

"You know," Oswald modulated, "at our place I cannot accomplish anything. My father thinks you ought to pay a crack gardener and leave it all to him. Our chrysanthemums are the largest in the State. The one that took all the prizes in New York last year weighed half a pound, without the stem. We have miles of glass and acres of horrible flower-beds, but not one spot to sit and dream."

Marian was dimly recalling the expression Oswald never failed to evoke on Archie Leighton's face.

Mr. Judd, however, was just settling comfortably into his stride. "Now, I'm longing to make a thoroughly artistic Italian garden; sunken and terraced, you know, with pergolas. Then there should be sediles, mosaic walks, clipped yews, bay-trees, and oranges in big green pots; an Egyptian lily pond, a Roman sundial, a Spanish glorieta, fountains——" He paused for breath.

Marian felt bored. "The flowers," she asked, perversely. "What of them?"

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Oswald was impermeable. "Oh, they are easy enough. I haven't taken that side much into consideration yet. In a real architectural garden, design is of paramount importance. Now, a peristyle at one end——"

The sound of wheels gave Marian an excuse for ceasing to listen, and she hastened up the grassy slope to welcome visitors in a very smart trap. By the time she reached the door, Violet and Killian had already alighted.

"Isn't this a surprise?" Violet was asking. "We only landed two days ago. Mamma wanted us to stay in town with them, but I thought we had better settle down at once in our own house and begin to get our things in order."

Marian looked at her in bewilderment. The ripening effects of matrimony had added at least five years to Violet's manner. Her prettiness was no less, but all girlishness had marvellously vanished. It was a compact, blooming little matron who held her dainty skirts aloof from the contamination of clean brick floors.

"Killian is a perfect dear." Violet's air of

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explaining the person she could by no possibility understand, to the person who could read him like an open book, roused in Marian a sense of impotent wrath. "He's the most reasonable creature in the world, when things are pointed out to him ; but,"—she gave him a little patronizing glance of affectionate proprietorship,—“ though he's tremendously clever in big things, in small ways he's hardly practical.” Killian stood looking not at all displeased as Violet rattled on : “ Of course, it was a great advantage to me abroad, his knowing such lots. When I'd been there before we didn't seem to see the same sorts of things.”

Oswald had joined them, and was meanwhile graciously welcoming Killian to Halstead. “ It's a long time since we've seen you here, Mr. Orth.”

“ Oh, Violet, I beg your pardon,—you do not know Mr. Judd?” Marian broke in, hastily, wondering if she were the only one of the group to whom this seemed an occasion of fantastic discomfort.

After due acknowledgment, Violet went on, with her unbroken conviction of importance.

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"You would be surprised to see how well Killian is up in things very few people know. He hardly ever looks at a guide-book. We didn't see all the galleries, but he could say who had painted almost any picture, even if he had never seen it before. I had taken an art course the year after I left school ; but it's so hard to remember that sort of thing your first winter. The next year I took French and psychology, just so as to go on improving my mind. Now, after we are all in order, if I'm not too busy, I shall do some heavy reading."

Oswald watched her with interested eyes. This youth, beauty, and receptiveness—this thirst for learning, combined with unfathomable ignorance—made Violet appear to him in the light of a sacred mission. Orth, of course, possessed a solid knowledge,—the kind that depends on an unimaginative grasp of facts,—most estimable in its way, but lacking a certain exquisiteness, a final sense of the scope of beauty for beauty's sake, art for art alone,—the right touch, the true ring, the perfect angle of appreciation. These Violet could hardly acquire from a man of



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business,—a successful coal operator. Oswald looked very handsome with the sun falling on his rich brown curls. Any doubts aroused in Violet's mind by his over-picturesqueness of face and attitude were allayed by the perfection of unquestionable riding-clothes. She viewed him with a willingness to be pleased as he asked, "You know this dear old place, Mrs. Orth?"

"No." Her tone was gracious. "But Mr. Orth has told me so much about it."

Marian wondered if this had given Violet as much entertainment as she had derived from Killian's accounts of Miss Dunham. She was beginning to agree with Romola as to the intelligence of all nice men and most of the others.

"You'll like it." Oswald spoke with conviction. "It is just the sort of thing you will value, Mrs. Orth. Its atmosphere is so mellow, one even tolerates the cruel conventionalizing of a Raphael Morghen when it hangs on these long-inhabited rooms, and the furniture——"

"Is it colonial?" again feeling solid ground under foot, Violet interrupted; "because all

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my things are colonial,—silver and all. You've no idea how hard it was to find exactly the right patterns. My furniture is old, too ; old or made on old models. Now that I've seen so much abroad, I'm almost sorry I didn't have one French room and another Italian. But one good thing,—cosey-corners have gone out. The Turkish sort, you know ; they always got so dusty,—hard to clean. I had a pale-blue cloth all marked up the back the first time I wore it, sitting in one of those places. It had to go straight to the cleaners."

"Do let us sit down," Marian put in. "And we'll have some tea. Were you long in Paris ?"

"Yes ; that is, for six weeks. But I much prefer London. So many people thought we were English."

"I should enjoy looking at your house." Oswald did not mean to lose a possible sphere of influence.

"You must come and see us. I think you could help me. I don't know where to put my 'Winged Victory.' Mildred Whalley stood hers on the end of the banisters. But

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the servants clipped off so many pieces. Gwendolin Herford—she was married two weeks after us, you know—put hers on top of a bookcase. Do you think it would look well on my piano—I've a baby grand—with ecclesiastical embroidery under it? I brought home some splendid pieces."

"Hardly that." Oswald was gravely authoritative. "There must never be anything on a piano, Mrs. Orth."

Marian stole a look at Killian, and felt as if she must have taken leave of her senses. Instead of finding him bored, angry, suffering self-controlled, she saw his dark face illuminated by a smile of indulgent pleasure.

"Nothing on the piano!" Violet echoed, considerably impressed, her mental activity enabling her at once to assimilate this dictum and store it for future use. "Then the pictures have to be hung. I have nineteen large photographs, mostly Botticellis, just a few Velasquez. That dear little Infanta, I forget her name, but Killian knows. All wedding-presents. Black frames; almost exactly alike. Wasn't it lucky? They go so well

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anywhere. I forgot to say the dining-room isn't colonial. Black carved German oak. Silver shows so much better on that."

"Isn't it wonderful," Kilian asked Marian, in a tone of one adult inviting another to admire an adorable child, "where she picked up all this?"

Marian was a trifle nearer Violet's age than Killian's, but to him she seemed fully his contemporary. With rueful humor she recognized that, having nursed his convalescence from Margaretta Chant,—not that he had ever spoken of it, but his need was implied and gallantly met,—she now was, by way of reward, to receive the post of confidante in his present happiness.

Oswald and Violet were deep in consultation. "Of course it is an ugly house," she was saying; "graystone, with mansard roof. But I've had all the wood-work painted white, and colonial columns and railings added to the porch, and some of those ornaments dotted about on the walls,—wooden garlands and urns; so it really doesn't look so badly."

Oswald's countenance expressed doubt,

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but, with a tact often lacking in apostles, he forbore pushing Mrs. Orth's education too far at a first sitting.

Marian and Killian fell into vaguely embarrassed silence. Knowing each other too intimately for ordinary superficial chat, they could hardly yet take up their customary strain of confidential talk. Killian inquired politely for Mr. Genge, a person whose existence he seldom remembered. Marian explained, with unnecessary detail, her father's absence from home. Business had taken him to New York. As they both knew that he had gone to his tailor, this did not open the way to further easy conversation. A pause threatened, but Violet, with a gracious smile, turned from Oswald. "Killian, we're both forgetting what we especially came for. Jane telephoned this morning, Marian, to know if we couldn't get word to you, on account of there being no telegraph delivery here on Sundays. Archie has given her a box for the foot-ball next Saturday, and she says you must certainly be there. Cousin Romola's going, too. Some magazine, I forget which, wants a foot-ball cover. Jane is to explain

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the game to her. She says you needn't bring extra wraps."

"You ought to go, Miss Marian," Oswald blandly urged. "No intelligent person should miss that fine barbaric recrudescence of the brute——"

"Oh, but I don't think you see anything brutal," Violet protested. "The men look white when they're being carried off the field; but I've been to any quantity of games, and never saw a thing that made me feel at all badly."

Oswald smiled at her almost affectionately. There seemed positively no limit to his mission. Mrs. Orth's entire area was rich virgin soil, unbroken by a single furrow of civilization. Again Marian glanced at Killian. Instead of looking as if he longed to kick Oswald, he showed simple gratification at the young man's appreciation of Violet.

"Yes, I'll go to the game with pleasure." Marian knew a sudden craving to be among masses of men and women,—strangers, people whose ideas she couldn't fathom. Her own thoughts and Killian's were proving sorry company.

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Jane thoroughly enjoyed playing hostess. The Dunhams' entertainments seldom appeased her instinct of hospitality; but the football box, being her very own, she had spared no pains in providing for the special comfort of each guest. There were wraps, pounds of candy, and small flags of either color. Jane's own preference lay with the navy; but if Romola or Marian wished to "root" for the other side, they should want no means of doing so with emphasis. She not only invited Archie, but put him next to Marian, devoting herself to Romola's complete enlightenment.

Thousands of people thronged into the big amphitheatre. Here the different college classes, here a body of dons. Now a batch of naval officers or a group of testy old generals. Anxious mothers, proud fathers, and, above all, young girls and young men in a ceaseless stream, like one vast St. Valentine's day parade. Family parties with bundles of rugs and noses reddening in the nipping air. Then a whole string of functionaries, surgeons with leather bags, a brace of stretchers, a white mule in trousers, which



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irritated beyond endurance a large undershot bulldog, official mascot to the rival team. Escaping from all restraint, he flew at the mule's heels, sure of fastening his teeth in the flapping garment. The inevitable result united the entire audience in an uproarious laugh. A row of men, muffled in thick blankets, took up position on either side of the field.

"A cold day for substitutes," whispered Jane.

With half-closed eyes Romola was peering about her. "Look at the hats," she said, "like monstrous dahlias and cabbages. Look at this family of children, as pretty as soap advertisements. White-stockinged legs ending in black shoes certainly have decorative quality."

"The worst of being much with her, since she is so successful," Marian put in, gently teasing, "is that you stop seeing anything as itself. Your eye begins to sort everybody and everything into types. It's bad enough if you only look at the magazines. There are days when an entire suburban train seems full of Peter Newels——"

"And what else are they?" Romola in-

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errupted. "I find there are weeks when the entire world seems to have passed the word to talk like Peter Newels; and that's far worse. Look!" She was watching the stream of people filter in to their seats. "If there isn't Mr. Orth's rough diamond of a country judge! He evidently believes in taking in whatever is to be seen."

The obstruction of an old gentleman, who had to look through seventeen pockets for his seat check, blocked the passage with a much outraged crowd. Before the current was again set free, a blare of trumpets and the crash of a brass band announced the entrance of the President of the United States. With shouts and cheers, the audience rose to its feet. From opposite ends of the arena the teams, in their grotesque accoutrements, ran into the field. Romola's eyes narrowed to slits as she watched with trained intentness. Jane murmured in her ear. The men fell into position, a few spasmodic and apparently ineffectual movements took place, and they tumbled in a squirming brown heap on the ground. Judge Borland was approaching the box.

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"I feel," muttered Romola, "that the Roscius of Butler County will make a cultured reference to the gladiatorial shows of ancient Rome. He will probably say, '*Morituri te salutant*, Mr. President.'"

The Judge lifted his silk hat; then, leaning his square back against the front of the box, bent a thoughtful gaze on the scrimmage. As he presently turned over his shoulder to offer a comment, Romola cast a malicious look of intelligence at Marian.

"Bait!" the Judge remarked. "That's what they look like. The kind you carry in a can for minnows,—earthworms. I used to be fairly expert with a bent pin, some forty years ago."

He spoke quite simply, with so little intention of scoring a point, that the burst of laughter which greeted this remark struck him as wholly out of proportion to its merit. Still, it is never unpleasant to be admired; and he acceded willingly to Romola's suggestion that he should take a vacant seat in Jane's box. "It's Miss Dunham's party," she explained; "but as chaperon I have some perquisites."

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"Yes, do come in," Jane urged. "You can point out the celebrities to us. There are lots here I have never——" A sharp fit of coughing interrupted her. "I've not a cold," she declared, when she could speak again.

"It sounds rather like one," Archie protested.

"Nothing but indigestion," the girl affirmed.

"Do you have to be told?" Romola scolded. "Jane has such a horror of people who fancy their maladies that she won't allow herself anything but the most mortifying ailments,—the kind of thing no decent person can lavish pretty talk on."

A tremendous roar of cheers, calls, and sounding drums drowned all conversation. Even a low-spirited looking old gentleman, sitting near, unexpectedly hopped up on the seat and stood shakily waving a flag.

"Navy scores one!" cried Jane, choking back a cough.

## IX

### Romola Croaks

“**M**Y idea, Cousin Romola, is to have the library thoroughly artistic. That is why I was so anxious for you to spend a night here before my furniture had been finally arranged. Mr. Judd has given me lots of advice; he’s been too kind for anything, coming over almost every day; but he is better at decoration than serious planning. Now, something in a general way like your studio——”

“Violet,”—Romola’s voice was under extreme control,—“do you ever think of anything but furniture?”

With an absorption as inevitable as any proper bird’s in nest-building, Violet was flitting about the drawing-room, giving little experimental touches to ornaments, altering the angle of a chair, patting heaps of silken cushions. All effervescence of the mating period had completely given way to a responsible

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matron's devotion to social duties, to her house, to her husband,—the latter rather as a practical than a sentimental factor in life.

“I want to have it all done by the time Killian comes back. You see, Romola,” she explained, “he has lots to occupy him at those horrid mines ; so he leaves this entirely to me.” Her air of virtuous importance began to fray Romola's temper. “I often think——” She broke off, delicately sniffing a bronze lamp with turquoise patina as thick as Alderney cream. “Umf ! that hasn't been carefully wiped. Ring the bell, will you please ; there by your hand. I often beg Killian to sell out to one of the big companies, and let the miners go. They are only a nuisance. —Maggie !” A black-frocked, white-capped maid stood at the door. “Take that lamp out and clean it over again.—You see, cousin,” she went on, without drawing breath, as Maggie noiselessly obeyed, “in dealing with inferiors, firmness is positively necessary. Killian spoils everybody. He thinks he can do more for his workmen than a large corporation ; he has a feeling about knowing them and their families. He wants me to

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take an interest in them, too. And, of course, I shall. But if he sold out, we needn't have all that bother." She was now standing on a chair, reaching up to straighten a picture.

"Take care!" Romola called out, sharply. "You shouldn't do that."

Violet came quickly over to Romola's side. Her manner betrayed some shyness. "Did mamma tell you, or did you——?"

"I saw!" The answer came ruthlessly.

Violet actually meditated. "I'm sorry," she said, quite without rancor; "but only on account of the reception. It is so convenient, sending my cards with Jane's coming out,—having the whole big thing together in town. Then next June I can give some garden-parties,—after I'm well again. I hoped no one would——"

"Oh, you are all right. You never looked better." Literal-minded people incited Romola to feats of mystification.

"But you said?" Violet hated not to understand.

"Killian!" Romola vouchsafed. "I never saw plainer signs of incipient paternity. The



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way he put you into a hansom that day we lunched at your mother's, before he went to Laurelton."

"What stuff you talk!" After a scandalized moment, Violet remonstrated, with flawless good humor, "You really gave me quite a turn."

"It's perfectly true." Romola wished Kilian no special ill, but her plans for Marian involved sacrificing him; moreover, in her opinion, so stupid a man deserved no better fate. "I don't think you wholly understand Mr. Orth." The meretricious ring of her voice was utterly lost on Violet, who only read her in the light of Miss Mallard's romance.

"I not understand my own husband!" Her surprise gave way to curiosity. "I'd really like to know what you do think about us." This subtlety resulted from an amused wish to see how far the painter would betray herself. Violet was never unkind, but her own sensibilities were not of a keenness to suggest a possible cruelty in exploiting those of any one else.

Romola's dramatic instinct at once staged

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the scene with diabolic cleverness. "Come over here and sit down by me?" Laying an inviting hand on the becushioned sofa, she solemnly reeled off platitudes as if imparting all the hidden wisdom of ages. "You see, a man of Killian's kind is always crazy for children. He wants to carry on his name. There is really something feudal and aristocratic in the Orths' position."

"Well, of course." Violet saw no reason for making such a fuss about obvious matters. "Don't you suppose I want children, too? After you are married and get your house in order, you are ready for a family. You wouldn't know what to do without it. I've gone out a lot, and of course we will always keep in touch with things; but unless I had children, what would there be for Killian and me to talk about, or what should I have to say to my own friends? If they had babies and I hadn't, we would be doing different things." To be different was Violet's most imaginative conception of failure.

"How you do develop!" Romola perfidiously flattered. "You pass through each successive phase, till it's like seeing the his-

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tory of the human race in a nutshell. Such a nice, pretty shell, too."

"But about Killian. Is that all?" Not having yet turned her attention to general evolutionary processes, Violet's interest in life was personal and special.

"By no means. As a husband he has phases, too. This is only number one,—wanting a son and an heir. When he gets it he'll be perfectly consumed with remorse at the bad time he has let you in for. Then comes your chance. All these coming months you can make him do exactly what you please." Romola had determined that Marian should be regaled with the most unattractive aspects of masculine docility. "You will have simply boundless influence. Use it. Raise the rents, sell the mines, make him wear a beard——"

"Oh, I should never care to do that. Haven't you noticed how handsome the lower part of Killian's face is?" Violet spoke in thorough good faith.

Maggie, bringing back the lamp, murmured that her mistress was wanted at the telephone.

"Mamma says Jane is sick," Violet pres-

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ently announced. "The doctor has put her to bed and sent for a nurse."

"Dear me." Romola at once regained the manner of a human being. "I hope he is an alarmist."

"Temperature a hundred and five, quick respiration, racking cough." Violet showed anxiety.

"It is all my fault,—keeping her at that horrid game. I ought to have seen she wasn't fit. It is enough for me to like any one for everything to go wrong with them." It was seldom that the little painter so betrayed her quarrel with life to uncomprehending ears.

Perched on the arms of Romola's sofa, Violet bestowed upon her cousin the facile instinctive caresses which so easily passed for affectionateness. "Don't say that," she gently admonished. "Nothing has gone wrong with me—or Killian."

"I don't feel sure." This view of her blessings drove Romola to indiscretion. "What if your tea has to be postponed?"

Indiscretion gave way to speechless exasperation at the sweetly reproving tone of

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Violet's answer. "You don't suppose I would think about that if Jane were really ill!"

"Really ill," however, Romola found to be the doctor's verdict, when unbearable restlessness sent her to make inquiries early the next morning. The prosperous house seemed as if its centre of life, withdrawn to some inner recess, no longer possessed a sufficient vitality to pervade a dismal parlor where vases of unfresh flowers stood neglected and Vixen lay shivering on a satin chair seat. Although the little dog jumped down and crept guiltily away as Mrs. Dunham rustled in, this misdemeanor passed without rebuke,—a symptom of detachment on Mrs. Dunham's part which made Romola put her questions with sinking heart.

"She's a good patient," the older lady reported. "Strong and reasonable enough, when she's herself. We've an excellent nurse, too."

"Is it dangerous?" Romola was white, scared, and indescribably cross.

"Pneumonia! You know how tricky that always is. But there is no immediate ground for alarm, Dr. Brodie says. The part I'm

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worrying most about is afterwards,—so hard to take care of a convalescent.” Mrs. Dunham began with determined optimism, but broke off, unhappily, “She is so unlike herself.”

Romola’s tormenting imagination conjured up pictures of Jane painfully coughing, burning with fever, or clammy in collapse,—a Jane whose emaciated body would hardly displace her bedclothes.

“She’s just a little flighty.” Mrs. Dunham began to lapse into the anxiety of a natural mother. “Talks all the time in such a distressing voice, and keeps fingering her blankets and sheets, as if she didn’t quite know what she was doing.”

The habit of intensely visualizing anything in which she took an interest clearly brought before Romola a creature with wandering eyes and defaced expression. The image of thin, white fingers ceaselessly plucking at the covers without rest or intention came between her and Mrs. Dunham’s further talk of ice-bags, nourishment, and consultations. Finally, Romola opened her mouth to speak, but only cleared her throat to cover a threat-

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ening sob ; and, after an abrupt leave-taking, she fled quickly towards that humbler quarter, where the sight of teeming, picturesque life usually proved a sedative to her quivering nerves. The day was gray and bitter. An east wind, blowing cruelly, filled the atmosphere with a fetid stench from a great oil-works far below on the river. Street industries had been driven in-doors. Neighbors, shawled and muffled, hastened about their business. Children looked pinched with cold and hunger. Everywhere there were frozen smells, frozen dirt, shivering dogs on doorsteps, vainly trying to sit on all their aching paws. A galloping horse and clanging gong marked the progress of an ambulance. It swung into an alley. But even a woman on a stretcher failed to collect an audience. Romola opened her purse,—five dollars and some silver. Two blocks above she had seen a small bank, rich in sonorous Italian inscriptions. Having succeeded, not without arousing much interest, in changing the money, she resumed her walk. A blear-eyed, stubbly tramp stood on a corner, drearily hesitating whether to turn



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north or south. As she passed, Romola thrust a coin into his hand.

"The price of five drinks," said she; "but you must promise to pray for a sick person. Do you understand?" To avoid collecting followers, she put a whole block between his amazement and her next beneficiary, a hooked-nosed, gray-bearded patriarch, grimy, but with a queer air of venerableness. He was hobbling home, discouraged, with a tray of unsold mechanical monkeys. It took some time and all of Romola's German to make him grasp her idea, and then his whimsical smile made her suspect him of intelligent scepticism. She bought the supplications of devout Italians, of elderly negroes; a small, keen-faced boy, hired at trifling expense, explained the bargain to anxious-eyed, bewigged Polish Jewesses. An interpreter of blended African and Asiatic blood induced two Chinese laundrymen to burn joss-sticks, and by one o'clock Romola found herself sufficiently tranquillized to think of lunch. Though her funds had run low, love for the quarter stopped short of a faith in its restaurants. A car soon whisked her to a great

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department store, where she made straight for a hollow square of counters surrounding bright nickel boilers, plate-glass cases of sweet stuff, like a still-life painter's nightmare. Almost white mulattresses, with painfully smoothed hair and immense style, were filling orders at a pace suggestive of impending nervous break-down. In spite of looking as morbid as a phantasy of Aubrey Beardsley, they showed normal professional partiality for gentlemen patrons.

"Marian! You here!" Romola exclaimed, pouncing upon the one empty stool.

"Why shouldn't I be economical, too?" Marian held out an attenuated purse.

Romola cocked her feet on the foot-rail. "My short legs make a miserable lap," she grumbled, laying fur collar and gloves across her knees. "You don't belong. You are different. It's a perfectly suitable place for me," she went on. "I find types. It's my business to keep in touch——" A frightful clash of chinaware drowned her sentence, and only subsided to be emulated by twenty-eight caged canaries hanging overhead among boughs of artificial apple-blossoms. These

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blossoms exhaled a rich fragrance of musk.

"Watch what they order," Romola managed to whisper. "It's worth a University Extension course in sociology." She was inspecting a new-comer,—a prize-fighter obviously out of condition, with large hands instinctively held close to his body, who asked, in a disheartened voice, for milk-toast ; at which two young clerks exchanged signals of amusement.

A showy typewriter girl complained in audible tones to a shabby one :

"I can't *help* it if I *am* too sensitive, *can* I? But, *anyhow*, when he brings strange *gentlemen* into the *office*, he certainly ought to make us *acquainted*."

From a grove of varnished palms an orchestral machine of at least eighty brass-band-power gave out the Tannhäuser March. The prize-fighter was trying Worcester sauce and red pepper with his milk-toast. The two clerks, having reached the toothpick course, chaffed their waitress, facetiously asking, "Say, Irene, snapper soup to-morrow? No? Isn't it Friday right enough?"

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A mild Quakeress, in sugar-scoop bonnet and thick, gray shawl, endeavored to avoid burning her mouth with stewed oysters. The orchestra played "The Holy City," followed by "Mamie, Mamie, ain't you Shamie?" A little woman of countrified aspect was confidentially appealing to a distracted waitress for advice, which resulted in crabs, pickles, and mince-pie. She ate slowly, with delicately curled fingers and all the ceremonial of a person revelling in fashionable luxuries. The Quakeress, having neatly folded her napkin, was looking dubiously at the check. Her inquiries met with an answer so cabalistic that she could only blush and helplessly finger the reticent bit of paper. Meeting her troubled eyes, Marian telegraphed relief by a glance towards the cashier's desk—— And then, no one could tell how it happened, a sudden uproar, a rush to the elevator shaft, lunches left unconsumed, people thronging. Frightened waitresses clambered across the counter, upsetting heavy plates and glasses. Men in shirt-sleeves and frock-coated floor-walkers vainly called the crowd to order.

Marian and Romola stood side by side,

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quite aloof from the turmoil. "Beastly sight," said the little painter, scornfully. "Don't they know they are all going to die, anyhow? As if death weren't the one fact we are absolutely sure of!" And then the two women's eyes met in a long look of confession,—the eyes of people to whom life is not sweet.

"If it is a fire, we shall burn up," Marian answered, quietly. "There is no way out. I'm glad I'm not as scared as that woman. Look at her! She's nothing but a terrified animal."

"If it gets too hot, we can always jump. There is no merit in slowly cooking." Romola's roving glance picked her window.

Employees carrying hose and buckets pushed towards the elevator. An agonized official stopped to speak. "Our fire-drill is perfect," he lamented. "If every one were as rational as you ladies, we could clear the whole building in five minutes." He passed on with a despairing gesture.

"And I really prefer to love my kind." Romola spoke with white exasperation. "But how can you help despising swine like these?"

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About the stairway and elevator shaft a fighting mob pressed ruthlessly upon one another ; men remonstrated, used force even, but unbridled panic mastered reason and decency. Employees in blue uniforms were doggedly sluicing the floors.

Suddenly Marian raised her head, like a person awakening from some long torpor. "This must stop." Her voice had a new ring. Romola watched her with a curiosity which overcame every other sensation. The unspent passion which never came into play, the potentialities rather than the actual qualities which so bound her to Marian, were these to find expression under this sudden stress ?

"They are crushing that little girl!" Marian's tragic face blazed. For a second she folded her arms and bent sombre looks of hatred on the struggle. All at once her white teeth showed in a smile, as with her customary undulating movements, composedly raising her skirt from the wet floor, she joined the fire-brigade and quietly gave out orders. Making no attempt to join her, Romola simply awaited the issue. The fire-

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men seemed to be remonstrating. Marian was standing very erect and haughty, urging, commanding. A child's shriek pierced the growing din. Marian had something in her hand,—a stick snatched from the floor. Romola saw her raise it and deliberately strike a man full across the eyes. Blinded, he dropped the nozzle of a great hose. In a flash the girl had seized it and was directing an icy flood where the crowd pressed thickest. Irresistibly, they grew steadier as the deluge continued. The fire-brigade was gaining control, and the terrified mass, indignant, but cowed, began to obey directions. City firemen now appeared on every side, and with reassuring laughter explained that a patent curling-iron had exploded, causing an hysterical saleslady, over-drilled, to give an alarm.

"My clothes are ruined," scolded a redundant matron in a drenched blue velvet dress and a hat like a deplorably wet Russian goat.

The excitement had swept away Romola's sense of decorum. "I think you look much nicer than before the hose played on you,"



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she remarked, consolingly. "And just notice! That little girl is hurt, and she isn't making any fuss at all."

The child, dripping and faint, lay quiet in Marian's arms. The girl's cheek rested tenderly against its wet, drooping head. She raised her eyes for one minute to the blue velvet lady. "If this child dies, you shall go to prison. Fireman, take that person's name and address, will you? I saw her step on this baby."

"And if any of you complain or talk about damages for your preposterous finery," Romola chimed in, "I'll make a point of being summoned as a witness and explain that every adult in line with the hose was guilty of manslaughter."

From all sides officials now thronged about Marian. Floor-walkers were explaining. The head of the firm appeared, made himself personally responsible for the child, and was soon begging Marian to accept a choice of Parisian costumes in place of her damaged garment.

Her minute of passion had left the girl subdued and weary. "This isn't spoilt ;

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only wet. If you will just send for a cab, thank you, I will take the child to the hospital. She seems to think her mother will come back for her. It's only a broken arm, I think, and the squeezing."

It was a long time before Romola made the slightest reference to what had happened; but late that afternoon, when the child had been satisfactorily disposed of and Marian, in soft kimono, lay toasting before Romola's hearth, the little painter busied herself making tea, and finally spoke her word: "It's no more than I expected of you, Marian," she grunted, shy of her own emotion. "You are capable of anything,—murder or heroism."

"Which was it this time?" Marian had regained her usual poise. "Only playing a hose?"

Romola caught her tone. "Murder! Don't you believe that fat pig will have pneumonia? By the way——" Her face puckered with delight. "Maybe I've shifted Jane's." And she proceeded to recount her morning in the quarter. "Jane has the quality of being lucky,—just as you haven't," the little woman added, meditatively.

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"I hope so." Marian was thoughtful. "Romola, I wish you would tell me. You have a way of talking as if you believed in Fates and Furies."

"So I do," Romola snapped, perversely. "To-day I thought the Furies were after you,—that you would be burned to a crisp. No such good fortune! It's the Fates, my dear, slow and relentless. I can see it all so plain! You being driven and driven. But God only knows where."

"Nothing very bad so far." Marian could not be made to take this seriously. "When our adventures began to-day, I was going to tell you something pleasant. Mrs. Dunham has asked me to go South with Jane for months,—as soon as she is well enough. So, since you have made sure of her speedy recovery——"

"A nice winter for me," protested Romola, "with you and Jane away and Violet and Adela Mallard at home!"

## X

### “You are Rather Nice, Archie”

WHEN Judge Borland accepted Mr. and Mrs. Orth's invitation to dine, it was with an unconfessed expectation that he might meet Marian Genge. He had not yet found his way to Halstead Mills, simply because at his time of life visits to young ladies seemed as little appropriate as lawn-tennis or waltzing. Yet he distinctly felt that it would be pleasant to see her again.

Among so many strangers, Marian had given him a comfortable sense of restfulness. Although she understood in a way quite beyond the reach of other women of his acquaintance, her pace was not too quick, and, above all, she did not seem either to want anything or to consider him in need of guidance. He had suffered a great deal since coming to town. Aggressively sympathetic ladies had testified towards his early career an interest which savored largely of patron-

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age. Only native caution had preserved him from entanglement in the politics of philanthropy. The civic-spirited sisterhood with one accord chose him as a special field, placing his name on innumerable boards and committees. In the course of one fortnight he had also been appointed floor-manager of three public balls, director of eight charitable societies, besides receiving urgent appeals to guarantee the competence of three violinists, a lecturer on cryptics, and two rival systems of sight-singing for the tone deaf. He had been asked to present the negative side at a mothers' meeting in a debate on "Do we over-sterilize our babies?" Miss Aspasia L. Motte Brown holding the affirmative; and a series of perfectly rational notes led to his granting an interview to a correspondent, who proposed founding a national association for dressing organ-grinders' monkeys in striped pajamas.

Disappointed at not seeing Miss Genge, he was partly consoled to find on his right the cross little painter, who at least never showed symptoms of considering him as so much available power, to be immediately

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diverted into running her particular mill. Romola was alive to the genuine cordiality of his smile as they found their places at Violet's well-appointed table, and waited with unusual resignation while his left-hand neighbor proceeded relentlessly to monopolize him. It was a dinner the business character of which made itself perhaps a trifle too emphatic : Mr. and Mrs. Apthorpe, of the Western Mines, the presidents of two coal-carrying railroads, and the treasurer of a trust. Through oysters and soup, Judge Borland listened conscientiously to Mrs. Apthorpe on the personal depravity of John Mitchell. "Everybody knows he is a priest in disguise," she affirmed, "and that is what makes his behavior so very disgraceful."

"But hasn't he a wife and children?" the Judge protested.

"Certainly, as a blind ! The Pope has given a special dispensation. There is no trick the Catholics won't stoop to."

At this the florid Irish countenances of Maggie and an assistant became suffused with angry purple.

"If anything hot and sticky is to be

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spilled,"—Romola thought it was her play, and contrived to speak for the Judge's ear alone,—“it is not hard to guess whose best dress will suffer. I suppose she actually believes what she's saying.”

He turned to her with undisguised relief. “What do you think about John Mitchell, Miss West?”

“Nobody has a right to think anything for at least five hundred years,” she rejoined. “We have no perspective, and the whole thing is too big for us to see more than the point rubbing against our own noses. I can only note symptoms, and they are too paradoxical to lead anywhere,—in forming judgment, I mean. Of course, these people talk and think about it all the time,—if you call that thinking,” she qualified.

“*They* do, anyhow.” The Judge was feeling better.

Romola's nervous fingers were grouping little patterns in salted almonds.

“The rest of us only grow interested when there is anything special going on,—a serious strike or some active demonstration,” she confessed.



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"You are likely to have plenty to interest you before this year is out." The Judge's tone was distinctly serious.

Romola's bright eyes flashed into his. "People who work as I do are never big," she suddenly volunteered. "We may look for principles, but always with a subconscious idea of reducing them to concrete expression on a small scale. But we have our sympathies."

"What do you mean by paradoxes?" he asked.

"Oh, there are no end to those." She paused, as if selecting among thousands. "One is that we who work directly with our own brains, whose earning capacity depends on intellect being recognized as properly having a high market price, all of us feel strongly socialistic and are perfectly willing, theoretically, to anticipate a state of society which seems to aim at approximating the value of head-work and hand-work."

"That's funny," said the Judge. "Is it really true?"

"Try for yourself. Just ask the first one you meet," Romola answered. "You will

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find all painters and musicians side with the down-trodden poor ; though, of course, it is the plutocrats who make their existence possible. Writers are just the same ; and I've even heard a great publisher talk about the injustice of his being able to give his children such luxuries as shoes and college education, while the honest stone-breaker only gets a dollar and a half a day."

"And yet," the Judge objected, "would that man pay as much royalty to an unknown young writer from the Middle West as he gives—say, to Rudyard Kipling?"

"That is another paradox." Romola was not to be caught. "Suppose society is drifting towards some radical readjustment? There is nothing unlikely in that, is there?"

"Many people expect it." The Judge was wary.

"Well, then," she went on, "isn't there something irresistibly comic in all these big men blindly and instinctively putting their industries in compact coherent shape, for convenient transference when the time comes?"

The Judge smiled appreciation.

"I made a cartoon, not long ago,"—she

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was fairly embarked,—“but of course no one would print it. All the heads of combines were there as bees,—intelligent, industrious bees who can't help draining every flower in sight and amassing honey in portable form. They don't do it from deliberate altruism, any more than the bee works with an eye to your buckwheat cakes; but the result is exactly the same. Whenever I read that a small factory or mine, or whatever it is, has been absorbed by such and such large company, I have a vision of J. P. Morgan meekly and unconsciously performing a function which leads straight to distribution of wealth,—driving another nail in his own coffin, so to speak.”

Killian's voice here broke in on them. “I wish I felt as sure as you do, Powers. If I were perfectly convinced that all the right is on our side, a strike would not be half so formidable.”

“Mr. Orth really ought to have been a miner,—he thinks so much of their interests,” Violet struck in from her end of the table. “As if there could possibly be any question of an operator's managing his own business or having it done for him.”

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"That is the way to talk, Mrs. Orth," approved Mr. Powers, whose temper had been considerably ruffled by Killian's speech. "If Orth says much more like that, we'll just take possession of Laurelton and put you in as manager.—Mighty sensible little wife Orth's got," he later observed to Mr. Apthorpe, over their cigars. "It makes me hot around the collar to hear one of ourselves talking like such a donkey. If we are to keep the country from going to smash, d—n him, we've got to stand together. That's where the others have us so. You don't catch any of them bothered with tomfool doubts about abstract justice to us."

After the drawing-room had been duly admired, conversation irresistibly drifted back to the all-engrossing topic. "Of course, the miners have a right to organize." Violet's pretty air of wisdom and moderation almost reconciled the older ladies to Killian's not having chosen a wife from among their daughters. "But organization should not give them a right to act."

Romola had fully resolved not to open her lips on any subject less pacific than lamp-

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shades. She had already borne with angelic patience one mother's inquiries as to which of two celebrities would best immortalize her son and heir on canvas. Knowing Miss West to be a portrait-painter also, the lady considered this a beautifully tactful conversational effort.

"No right at all," Mrs. Apthorpe chimed in.

Romola glanced about the luxurious, softly-lighted room, at the women in their rich dresses and jewels, at Violet's dainty, peachy cheeks. They were so secure, so prosperous, so blindly formulating phrases quite without meaning, with no effort to see the coming flood and steer with it,—for dear life, perhaps. "It's might they have," she grimly ejaculated. "You are fighting in your last trenches; and if they prove stronger than you, you will be wiped off the face of the earth." A scared silence followed this outburst; and the men, coming in, found their womenkind casting fluttered, uneasy looks upon Romola, white and dangerous in their midst, with pupils shining and dilated as if from recent thrilling visions.

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"I've disgraced myself," she whispered, penitently, to Killian, who promptly joined her with the same instinct that would have led him to soothe a naughty, angry kitten.

He looked at her, unsmiling, but with a suspicious twinkle. "Fighting the crowd?" he asked.

"Worse." Romola's mood alternated between indiscreet ebullition and exhausted depression. "What is the sense in telling them the truth, when they only think I'm crazy?"

"I wish, if you happen to have much about you, you would give me a sight of it."

"Don't say truth at the bottom of a mine. There will be at least ten thousand people making that subtle play upon words daily, when the strike is declared," she snapped.

"I wasn't going to." Killian smiled now. "But could you oblige me with the exact date; it would be very useful?"

Romola had become so imbued with Marian's point of view that every word and intonation of Killian's affected her as she believed it must appear to Marian. In spite of her exasperation at his dumbness about Violet, she was obliged, reluctantly, to grant

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him immense attraction. He was quiet, strong enough to permit himself doubts; perceptive, alert, with personal ways of infinite pleasantness. Abundant humor prevented his seriousness from ever growing outwardly strenuous, and his sympathy for the wrong side showed no tendency to express itself in bad clothes or indifference to the quality of wine and tobacco.

Romola half closed her eyes to conjure up an image of Marian standing at his side, Marian wearing his ring on her slim brown hand. To drive away this obsession she looked across the room at the Judge, who was listening with deep attention to Mrs. Orth.

"Why don't you impress your views on my cousin Violet?" she asked, jarringly.

Killian's smile struck her as faintly bewildered; but, nevertheless, Romola knew he was administering a well-earned snub when he answered: "Teach Violet! That wise little woman knows a lot more than I do already."

The announcement of some one's carriage shuffled all guests afresh, and Judge Borland



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brought up at Romola's side with a question. "When does Miss Dunham start?" he asked, bluntly.

Romola's tale of indiscretion was complete for the evening, so she replied, to his satisfaction, that in a week Jane would be sufficiently strong to take the Florida special for a winter in the South.

"I wonder would you do me an immense favor?" He paused, as if he had spoken unadvisedly. "After all, there is no earthly reason for my bothering you."

"I'd rather like to, if it is nothing foolish." Romola's tone was friendly.

"Would you tell me some books to send her,—that is, if she likes reading? I've so little idea of what interests young girls."

"What do you like yourself?" Romola asked, irrelevantly.

"Oh, nothing special,—law books and newspapers."

"No novels?"

"Not things ladies would know about," he apologized. "Fielding and Sterne."

Romola blinked, but said nothing.

"And I like some poetry." The Judge

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was nearly blushing. "Catullus and Horace. They aren't bad for five minutes, just before you drop asleep."

Though he was far from knowing it, Judge Borland's intercourse with Romola consisted in her doing him rank injustice and rushing into acts of extravagant reparation. "Suppose," she offered, hastily, "I were to go with you and look over the new novels. I might bring Miss Genge along. She has been staying so much at the Dunhams' that she will know what Jane has not read. It must be about ninety-nine and a half per cent. of any gentleman's library.

\* \* \* \* \*

"How did that fat judge happen to light on such a jolly lot of books?" Jane inquired, as the train finally moved out of the station.

"Romola and I went with him."

Marian was very tired and sad. This journey, which should have been so pleasant, gave her no hope of distraction. Moreover, the last days had been made painful by a scene with Archie. Oh, the quietest, the most considerate scene. The young fellow had

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taken his disappointment like a man. There had been no ungenerous pleadings, no reproaches, no hint of the material advantages he was so able to afford her. But the fact remained,—he had asked, and she had refused; consequently, not that he would have it so, this refusal must in future be a conscious bar to easy, pleasant intercourse.

“One thing,” Archie had affirmed. He was standing directly facing her, hands in pockets, legs slightly apart, his fresh, handsome face a trifle paler than usual, but with an air of cheerful resolution. “So long as you are unmarried, I’ll always be waiting. You can just treat me as if nothing had happened,—till the next time, I mean. I won’t bother you between whiles.”

“It won’t do!” Marian hated losing Archie. “While you feel so you must not come near me. It’s the only way.” Marian’s voice was very gentle.

Archie took this in silence. Presently he shook his head, with a laugh. “You can’t forbid my coming South to see Jane.”

There was a long pause. It would certainly be agreeable to have him. Marian

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walked to the window and looked out at the bare trees and chilly water. Crusts of thin ice were forming along the banks; frozen spray festooned lower boughs near the waterfall. Killian had left her. Even Oswald Eric Judd now wavered to Violet. The boy was absurd,—something of a bore; yet his desertion was not without leaving its smart. She loved to be with Archie, and found comfort in his unfailing allegiance. After all, if he preferred seeing her,—on any terms. She cast a speculative glance over her shoulder. Archie, tempted, drew nearer, too impulsively.

She quickly faced him. "That wouldn't be fair." This came with reluctance.

"Perfectly fair. You have told me it was no use; you haven't left me one particle of encouragement. But I'm a grown man, and don't have to be mothered-up,"—his voice softened,—"even by you, Marian. If I come a cropper, it's no fault of yours. I take the risk, thoroughly understanding. It's perfectly fair."

"Fair to Jane?" Marian asked.

This brought Archie up abruptly. He

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stood poised like a person suddenly stopped in full swing of bodily locomotion. Presently he disclaimed such a possibility energetically, almost indignantly. "Jane's a sensible girl; she would never think of such a thing." He twisted the sharp ends of his moustache conclusively.

Marian gently persisted: "If you come down there, avowedly to see her—— She has been very ill. People are impressionable after that; they are weak, shaken. And, then, would there be anything so preposterous? You are rather nice, Archie." This softly, with involuntary regret.

"I've not exactly found myself irresistible," Archie pointed out, ruefully.

"Just think a minute," Marian pleaded. "You would find it perfectly natural for me to—to"—this proved difficult of utterance—"to feel that way about you, and utterly absurd for Jane; although, up to a certain stage, you've been on precisely the same terms with both of us. Can't you see? How is she to know the difference?"

"Don't you suppose a woman always knows?" Archie had a man's inborn con-

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viction on that score. "Besides," he added, as an after-thought, "she is the only person I have told."

It was Marian's turn to flush. "I'm right on general principles. Nice men never think of the mischief they may be doing."

"Would you like me, for instance, to warn every woman I meet not to——?" Archie broke off in high disgust. This digression, however, had so cleared the air of sentiment that Marian was now regarding him with the friendliest amusement. "You don't really mind my coming?" he asked, hopefully.

Marian had again turned to the window. "I'd rather not," she said, over her shoulder.

There was a long minute's silence. "Oh, in that case,"—he came towards her with extended palm,—“shake hands and good-bye. But you will find me waiting in the spring.”

Nevertheless, he had come to see them off, bringing candy and flowers, joking spiritedly with Romola, who brought nothing but an access of despair at the decoration of sleeping-cars. Mrs. Dunham, Violet, and the Judge plunged up and down the aisle, their heavy clothes sticking to the velvet

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seats. Mr. Dunham hovered about the platform, tipping porters, who began to bustle in with extra pillows. Jane was engulfed in rugs and cushions. Commercial travellers produced smoking-caps out of large grips. Passengers who had come from New York, stretching their legs on the platform, eyed all new-comers.

"A telegram caught Killian at the last minute." Violet's voice was always audible. "Some fuss at the mines. I declare we have no comfort of our lives."

"Look out! Violet, don't trip on that bag!" Mrs. Dunham revelled in prospective grandmotherhood.

Jane squeezed Violet's hand with feeble fingers. The mysteries of existence filled her with vague reverence and that undefined sensation of all young creatures, when an unspeakable experience suddenly comes to the next in line; the same experience known to aged people when one more contemporary achieves the last great experience,—the same, but with a difference. "Take care of yourself, old lady," the girl whispered, tears of weakness springing to her eyes.



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“ Oh, I'm fine !” Violet kissed her vigorously. “ Too bad, Killian isn't here.”

Marian found herself uncontrollably echoing this wish, and with utter dismay realized that, on leaving the North behind, her dominant sensation was a weary hunger for only a sight of Violet Orth's husband.

## XI

### Jane Quotes Her Thackeray

IT was only on opening an envelope addressed in Archie's brisk, characteristic hand that Marian realized her oversight in not forbidding him to write. He began with a formal "My dear Miss Genge," and proceeded at once to discreet inquiries concerning Jane's right lung, the quality of available saddle-horses, and the probable length of their stay. "There is a nasty rumor," he continued, "that Sandhurst in The Pines is such an entrancing spot that you two won't come home till May, so I'm forming a whole new set of habits to pass the time. One is to drop in on Miss West of an afternoon, but very often. If you consider this dangerous to her peace of mind, wire me. I'd hate to think of her in trouble on my account."

"Mr. Leighton writes such nonsense," Marian volunteered, as Jane's eye visibly noted the smile evoked by this suggestion.

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They were lounging at ease on a broad veranda, partly glass-enclosed, partly open to balmy air sweet from a wilderness of stunted pines. A bowl of fragrant yellow jasmine stood on a low wicker table at Jane's elbow; scattered books and papers bore testimony to the eagerness with which everything had been flung aside on the arrival of Northern mail. Having exhausted her own budget, Jane, still pale and invalidish, crossed her long legs with an extreme flexibility born of relaxed muscle and general leanness. Much too polite to question, she had been secretly hoping for a share of Marian's many letters. "What is he in for now?" she asked, philosophically accepting second-hand news of Archie.

"He intimates that he is trifling with Romola's affections; at least, he talks about dropping in on her very often. Those are the exact words."

"Isn't he absurd!" Jane thought it over. "Why, Romola's getting gay." She hunted among her own letters. "Listen. This is Violet: 'I'd like to know how many afternoons a week Killian's Judge Borland spends

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in a certain studio. She isn't painting him, either.' ”

Marian smiled. “I've a letter from Romola, too ; but we must see what Archie says first. Yes, here it is. ‘On the whole, perhaps you needn't bother. My attractions——’ ”

Jane looked up. The absence of context gave this an odd sound from Archie. Marian, however, read on, without explanation : “ ‘My attractions are quite overbalanced—overweighted, you might say—by Borland's. He has shed five good pounds walking up her stairs, but put them on again drinking tea which he doesn't truly relish. She won't let us smoke, either ; because untidiness, Scotch, and tobacco are what she calls *bourgeois*. According to her, the true note of Bohemia now lurks in Oolong, with cream and fresh lady-fingers ; and it isn't at all certain that the tea shouldn't be lemonade. She takes the Judge across a pretty stiff country ; but he always plays the game, now and then comes out ahead, even though his wind's a little queer sometimes.’ ” Archie's colloquial style rang in Jane's ears grateful as a long-craved mother tongue, and with inward re-

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gret she felt in Marian's voice a vague putting on of brakes. The reading aloud continued, but slower, with an increasing reserve. " ' He and Romola are the rummest pair. She likes him fast enough, but there's a hitch somewhere. I've seen mothers like that,—when they found a man pleasant enough company for themselves, but didn't fancy his fooling around their daughters. You would know what the trouble was in a minute, but I'm too dense to get farther than this.' "

A glance ahead warned Marian against imparting the next sentence. He wrote, " To me, when we are alone, Miss West talks of you. She thinks you moon too much (her word, not mine). That you would be better for marrying some decent, commonplace fellow ; not too clever, just an ordinary man ; young ; I'm not sure she didn't say healthy. One who would never bother about understanding you. The rest she only hints at. I think she means he ought to be rather partial to you. She also favors a fair man, with sociable tastes. It's a pity you can't run across such a person, Marian, if only to please her. She's very fond of you. Oh,

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my dear! If it's true that you ought to marry, why not try it? You don't dislike me, and I've more than enough of the other to go round,—the partiality. It's rather low of me, writing this, but when I even hint at it to your face, you slide off miles out of reach. I've only once been able to make you listen, and then it distressed you so that it took a brute to go on. Afterwards, thinking it over, it seemed that if I could just disregard your feelings and make you, Marian dear, you might not be so unhappy in the long run. Don't be afraid of my talking about this with Miss West. Although we never get very far away from it, we never come any nearer than the abstract proposition."

Marian thrust the letter in her belt. After all, some day perhaps. Why not? She was growing impatient at poverty and loneliness of spirit. Surely no woman could wish a better fate than to be well loved by Archie. Of course, the real meaning of life must always be to feel, if only for a day or an hour, to the limit of human capacity; but some people were destined to miss it. Miss-

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ing it, they must still live. Marian deliberately reckoned the gain,—a companion never tiresome, whose taste in behavior could be endlessly trusted, and the closed door of a beautiful world open to her hand. True, this could not be had quite free of cost. There was a price.

Leaning back in her long chair, Jane rested lazy eyes on her friend with that deep satisfaction Marian's bodily presence never failed to inspire among her intimates.

In a second she looked away. It was against the young girl's code to watch people whose train of thought betrayed them into blushes.

Marian turned to her other letters. Romola wrote: "The most instructive thing ever seen is the evolution of Violet. She is going to be as eternal a mother as Niobe, only much cheerfuller. In the course of twelve lunar months I've seen her a typical conventional dancing belle, a blissful *verlobte*, a dressmaker's dream of a bride. The parson read a few words over her, and straightway she became the most conscientious, able householder now living; and next



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she will break the record as an intelligent maternal expert. When that is settled, she'll lay hands on the rudder of society. No; there is a shade of difference. Violet will never steer big bodies; she will only sail her own bark with triumphant decorum. Just now she's reading. Her table displays a periodical called *Infancy*, a journal of pediatrics; medical books on the care of young children; pseudo-scientific leaflets on the earliest manifestations of reason, conscience, and the Lord knows what, in new-born babies. If I didn't find her solemn as a little pink owl over a volume of *Émile*! Absolutely that! She remembered that her French literature said something about Rousseau and the education of children. Anyhow, she'll soon know it all, and Mr. Orth just sits and admires. That man contains treasures of domesticity. His wife entirely covers the field of women for him. In this respect he is settled once for all. If Violet were to turn black and take to drink, he'd go on adoring her exactly the same, for no better reason than because she is his wife. It's in his marrow. She is sufficiently fond of him,

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though as soon as the baby appears he will be completely side-tracked. But, bless you, he'll never know it. I think, of all so-called virtues, fidelity is the stupidest, as love of hearth is the most selfish. It brands Killian as not having a spark of imagination. Why should he care for her, when he courted an entirely different creature? Violet Dunham was a kind of a wild-rose thing, and Mrs. Orth is nothing but an admirably practical lady sparrow. Pretty, if you care for that sort, but only representing general instincts. She is no more an individual person! I'm going to study ornithology, to find out what occupies a good mother-bird between broods. They migrate, don't they, but in flocks, and fix up their nests and do whatever the bird next door is doing? I never heard of a couple of married robins going off for a little jaunt together, just to enjoy one another's company. You, my dear, will never be like Violet. That is the trouble; you are slightly out of line. Your predilections are personal, not racial. Hence your claim to the abused adjective,—I've not indulged myself in it for years,—fascinating. But it would

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never do to have many of your kind. They are upsetting, while such accountable creatures as Violet make the good, tiresome mortar which keeps society from disintegrating and tumbling in dangerous heaps. Killian has an erratic vein, too. It shows in his love for organized labor. A compensating instinct made him tie to a preserver, not a destroyer. After all, it really is a well-ordered world, taken by and large, where Killians marry Violets and everything happens for the best. I only hope your guardian angel may steer you to as safe a port."

Not a definite word did Romola speak of Archie Leighton.

Marian gathered up her letters and strolled slowly down a sandy path, under the sweet-smelling pine-trees. Was that to be her best hope, a safe port? By chance or design, who could say? Romola had let in light on a subconscious thought. Marian confessed it now. All these weary months, what had she been really doing but waiting for Killian to come back to her. Now she knew the truth. He would never come. To the end, to the very end, with him it would

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always be his wife, the mother of his children. Here, in the bright, warm sunlight, she again read the letter in which Archie never erred by offering bribes or hinting at possible joys of luxury, of travel, of adventure; never made one plea but that he wanted her. That, however, could wait. Her immediate task was to be a cheerful companion to Jane, whose spirits still showed the depression of present weakness and recent suffering.

When she came back to the veranda, Jane was walking briskly up and down, with a heightened color and a return of animation too sudden not to suggest some exciting experience. No explanation, however, was forthcoming, till just before bedtime, when she abruptly propounded, "What do you make of Southern men, Marian?"

"I know so few. Of whom are you thinking?" Marian showed ready interest. "Are there any here but that young fellow who rode in one day from some plantation?"

"That's the one!" Jane radiated disfavor.

"I thought him a nice boy." Marian wondered what was coming. "Easy manners, chatty, and not bad looking, either."

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"Easy!" Jane's tone promised volumes.

"What is it? After this, you really have to tell." Marian stifled all sign of amusement.

"Well, you simply wouldn't believe what happened." Jane was in deadly earnest. "While you were off walking he came again and brought me some magnolia blossoms,—fat things, smelling like hair-oil."

"Oh, oh!" Marian protested. "Things like a perfect white dove, smelling of heaven!"

Jane shook her head. "Bad as Archie's gardenias, and bigger. Anyhow, I thanked him, of course, and he sat down on that chair by me. Presently, we were just talking along, about horseshoes I think it was, and what do you suppose he did? I assure you, Marian, it was not a bit my fault. You know whether I am like that. He took my hand in both of his and began squeezing it!" Jane spoke in hot disdain. "Did you ever hear anything so sickening?"

Marian's lips tightened, but respect for youth stood high in her list of essential

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virtues. "And what did you say?" This she put with unfaltering gravity.

"If I'd been strong, I'd have biffed him well." Jane was seriously outraged. "But it's no use doing that unless you can do it good and hard. I just told him he was an impertinent puppy and to go home; and he went. I think he was furious; but what could he expect? Of course, I shall cut him. Wouldn't you?"

The last answered a faint flicker of dissent on Marian's face.

"Is that quite necessary?" she asked. "It may be awkward. Every one will see that there has been trouble."

"You would go on knowing such a fresh pig? You see, if I were the kind of girl who carries on, or anything like that, there would have been some excuse; he might have misunderstood. But with me!"

"I know, I know." Marian hesitated.

"What would you have done yourself?" Jane was determined to sift this to the bottom.

"Sometimes they behave foolishly without meaning any harm." Marian spoke doubt-

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fully. "Probably we have ways of our own that strike them as queer."

"Do you mean"—Jane rarely found Marian other than perfect—"that a girl should do just what the people she's with expect?"

"Not quite that, either." Marian was very gentle. "But if he really did not mean any disrespect, I'd let him see my point of view and have a chance of conforming to it, rather than fight. That's all."

"How do you mean?" Jane hardly felt convinced.

Marian seemed to be consulting a remote memory. "Something of that sort"—she tested Jane with an observing eye—"happened to me—once." Jane accepted this with unquestioning literalness. "And I only suggested that it was skipping too many preliminaries. He asked how long they usually took. He didn't really like my answer. I said about twenty years; but it showed him my code without the fuss of a fight."

"Do you suppose Killian or Archie ever——?"

Marian paused before answering. "Not



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Archie, unless a pretty woman hinted,—hinted unmistakably. Killian never at all, unless he cared really, and she cared, too.”

Jane’s argument was coming out just where she wanted it. “Well, then, if the nice men don’t, what use is there bothering with the others?”

This produced in Marian a gleam, a sudden glow of that tenderness for which they all loved her, however rare its manifestations. With remorseful affection she drew the girl to her and very sweetly kissed her forehead. “Don’t ever consult me, Jane. Your own feelings are so right, dear. Never let me talk that way to you again. What comes to you on sheer impulse will always be a thousand times better than anything you could get from me. It is good to be with you, my blessed child; you feel and see straight,—straight as truth. You will never experiment with yourself or any one else. Dear,” she pleaded, oddly, “please, if you can help it, don’t quite despise me for being as I am.”

“I suspect you are all right.” Unprovided with outward forms of emotion, Jane rubbed

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a reassuring nose against Marian's shoulder.  
"I'm a rough beast, anyway. What was that you were reading me in Thackeray?— If Fitz-boodle had only asked, 'From what gentleman did you learn your language?' "

## XII

### “Killian the Fourth”

“I’M perfectly well,” said Violet, “and so is the baby; but all the books insist on your taking a certain amount of rest for a while, so I don’t come down-stairs till after lunch.”

It was a bright May morning, and Jane, who was staying at Halstead, had driven over with Marian for a first sight of a month-old nephew. “Rather dull work, isn’t it?” the young girl hazarded. “I’ll never forget the nuisance of being laid up last winter.” Violet, in a billowy tea-gown, pink and fresh as ever, but showing a trace of physical languor, was a new and slightly embarrassing personage to her sister. The great personage, Killian, Junior, was now borne in from his own apartments by an immaculate nurse. He lay on a large pillow, industriously practising the art of focussing a pair of neutral-colored, lashless eyes, at the same time giving him-

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self advanced Swoboda exercises for chest expansion with arm and leg development.

"Dull!" Violet protested. "Indeed, no. This isn't a bit like having pneumonia. There is a great deal to be done, and then I read so much." This in a tone implying familiarity with all serious literature.

Jane was inspecting the baby with reverential curiosity.

"Isn't he pretty?" The nurse saw her need of a safe lead.

"Perfectly lovely," Marian exclaimed, rushing to the rescue of a young aunt who found her nephew rather interesting than beautiful. "See those dear little ears flat to his head, and such nice finger-nails!"

With a convulsive contortion, the baby's persevering efforts now succeeded in freeing from its covering one slightly bowed, purplish leg.

"Poor little beggar! Why does he squirm so?" Jane felt ignorantly sympathetic.

"All healthy children do that. It's the involuntary cerebral impulse towards muscular control," Violet explained. The nurse blanketed his recalcitrant red toes, the baby howled

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with wrath, and Jane offered a consoling knuckle, on which his wet gums closed with perfect satisfaction. "Jane dear,"—Violet spoke with the gentleness of a person who shrinks from administering a necessary reproof,—“are you sure your finger is absolutely sterile? You know such care is necessary. We are going always to keep a pail of hot water in the nursery, so that when he drops his toys on the floor they can be dipped and cleansed before he touches them to his mouth. What’s that, Maggie? Miss West? Yes, she can come up. Keep the baby here a few minutes longer, Miss Bailey, please.”

Marian felt an invincible reluctance to touching Killian’s child. She would have dearly loved to take it away and keep it to herself,—to kiss and cradle it softly in her arms, to lavish upon it treasures of unhygienic caresses; but to treat it like any ordinary baby on exhibition was utterly beyond her power. The appearance of Romola with a camera afforded welcome relief.

“As soon as you have looked at him, we’ll send him off,” Violet announced. “I

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don't think Marian or Jane are very much interested in babies."

"The sun's too high to take him now," said Romola, with a quizzical look at her young kinsman. "After lunch, if it doesn't interfere with his little scheme of life."

"Romola makes fun of the modern, systematic way of treating babies." Violet recognized the humor of this remark, but did not consider it particularly amusing. "I don't see how people got along in the old days, but, of course, no one who hasn't had a child can realize the comfort of being able to know exactly what is the right thing to do."

"Do you never have any doubts?" Romola asked.

Violet sighed. "Well, I suppose nothing can be quite perfect, and when the books contradict each other, sometimes it's rather puzzling. *Mothers' Aid* says, till a child can control its own motions it must lie always on the back or the right side, so that the liver doesn't impinge on the digestive organs. *Mothers' Guide* insists that a baby should be laid on the right and left side alternately; turned four times every three

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hours to secure a perfectly symmetrical development of the soft bones of the skull."

"What does the doctor say?" Romola had become spokesman; Jane and Marian listened, awe-struck.

"The doctor? Well, he really is a little old-fashioned sometimes. He says to leave him alone till he cries. Now, he never does cry unless he's hungry or in a temper; so that advice isn't practical. Oh, girls, you have no idea of the responsibilities. There are so many things to decide."

"What does Killian say?" Romola pursued her inquiries.

"Killian! Now what should a man know about babies? Yes, Miss Bailey, you may take him away."

"There is one thing that always distresses me." Romola spoke to Marian abruptly, as if easing herself after a long conversation in a foreign tongue. "I hate to see these pretty, sweet, young nurses expending treasures of womanliness in a sort of spurious mothering of other women's babies. They know it all; they have a vague impersonal love and a special abnormal knowledge. I



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suppose, if they marry and have babies of their own, it comes out all right ; but if they don't."

Violet listened with polite impatience. Philosophic discussion of the thwarted instincts of Miss Bailey struck her as far-fetched and irrelevant. Taking advantage of a speculative pause in Romola's speech, she cut in :

"A man, of course, decides on his son's college, but there are thousands of things which no father understands about ; and, besides, men are so dilatory. I wanted, as soon as he was born, to choose a school and enter him at once. Now, here he's a month old, and it hasn't been done yet."

"Dear me," Romola broke in. "*Him* used to be Killian."

This remark also affected Violet as extraneous matter. "Then the question of a nursery governess,—whether she shall be French or German ; and if he shall take piano or violin lessons, and which dancing-class. If I could be sure of his having a little sister soon, I'd prefer Mrs. Compton's ; it's better arranged for boys with girls. But

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for boys alone, Mrs. Henderson's has certain advantages." Fairly vanquished by Violet's grasp on the future, even Romola had fallen to the rank of a mere listener, and the three spinsters sat in a meek half-circle, spiritlessly facing a lady whose intelligent forethought far surpassed the standard of any number of wise virgins. "Of course there could be no trouble about his name. We simply had to call him Killian Orth the fourth." The complacent mother paused for breath.

"Where are the two others?" Romola never remained long quiescent.

"Killian's father and grandfather." Violet suspected nothing.

"Dear me! I never knew they were still alive." Romola's irritation took the guise of unnatural blandness.

"Alive! Why, they've been dead for years and years. His father was shot at Gettysburg. But people always do that nowadays. They put it on their cards."

"Some people may." Romola's fund of amiability had been badly overdrawn. "It certainly is a convenient way of showing that a family has possessed names and surnames

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for two or three generations ; but I shouldn't think an Orth would care to sanction such a *roturier* breach of civilized usage."

"*Roturier !*" Violet considered this question with perfect reasonableness and lack of offence.

"Why, there is Killian !" Marian suddenly broke out, involuntarily.

"Killian ! Now !" Violet exclaimed, in surprise. "He never comes home till afternoon."

"I heard his voice in the hall," Marian hastily explained. This was not true. She had only heard his step.

"There are too many people here. I'll go down and arrange my tripod," said Romola. "The afternoon sun must strike some of your west windows."

As Romola hurried off, Violet cast a significant look towards Jane. Her imperfectly developed powers of observation had not grasped the fact that only in Marian's presence did Romola avoid Killian,—unbroken circumstantial evidence having made it appear that the little painter altogether shunned the sight of him. Jane, by whose code it was "beastly" to notice anything involving other

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people's feelings, met Violet's significant look with a gaze of utter blankness.

"Tell him to come in, please," Violet went on. "But don't you two go away. I know he wants to see you."

"Just the people I was after." Killian felt really pleased at Jane's air of restored health. That Marian should be pale and quiet seemed only natural. It was part of her charm to be subdued and receptive.

"You see, Violet,"—something in the tone of his voice caught Marian's sensitive ear; he was not speaking quite spontaneously; the note of gayety rang false,—"that wretched strike is on. Declared this morning. I only came to let you know that everything is all right; but I must go to Laurelton this afternoon."

"Will there be a row?" Jane asked, inconsiderately.

"Not a chance." Killian gave a glance at Violet. "You see, my men only go out because the others do. They've not a grievance of their own."

Marian looked at Violet long and earnestly. No, she hadn't a twinge of uneasi-

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ness. She accepted Killian's statement at its face value. The bitterness, the disappointment of having his men desert him,—those people for whom he worked so hard, whose interests he studied till they had not a grievance of their own,—the pain of this was a closed book to Killian Orth's wife. To her a strike was merely a nuisance,—an exasperating instance of the power of common people to annoy their betters.

“If you'd only sell out to one of the big companies and be done with it. I think you are very foolish.” Violet's tone showed a certain edge. She was of course very fond of Killian ; but Mrs. Dunham herself could hardly have felt less sympathetic with a plan of action only to be described as quixotic.

Killian's mobile eyebrows wrinkled up in little furrows of perplexity and amusement. By a determined blindness he rated any lack of perception in his wife as a characteristically feminine limitation, part of her womanly quality. “None of you would see it in that light if you'd ever been there.” He addressed Marian, who felt a hopeless wish to disclaim any such feeling, to resent

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being in any way classified with Violet. "Those helpless, ignorant women and children," he went on, "need some one to watch over them ; some care a little more personal than they can get from a big corporation. Things have been going so well." He was really wistful. "We have been starting night-schools and co-operative stores, and the women were all looking forward to seeing Violet and learning a lot from her about babies." The line of his wife's lips grew suddenly thin. At times she had a horrid suspicion that her husband might be just a trifle soft. Violet was an habitual and sincere church-goer, and read two verses out of a little devotional book every night before going to bed. She had done so ever since she was confirmed. Killian's habit of riding or walking on Sunday mornings had been a serious distress to her,—it wasn't right, and it "looked queer,"—but his lack of personal animosity against a batch of impertinent dependents filled her with disapproval.

Lunch was a constrained meal. Few men can rally under the handicap of a tableful of women, and, with all the good-will in the

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world, conversation fell into the straights where every one takes a laborious turn, politely giving time for the very last word of each preceding speech. Miss Bailey's presence was a check on intimate talk, a check of which she was fully conscious. She was also properly conscious that entertaining guests did not fall within her province. A pretty girl, rather shy and awkward apart from professional duties, she ate sparingly and without relish, answering a little jerkily when spoken to, volunteering nothing. Killian plied her with food, absent-mindedly urging whiskey-and-soda upon her. Romola, ordinarily made eloquent by discomfort, when trapped by fate into the society of Marian and Killian, brooded in resentful silence. Marian was oppressed with fears of probable danger to Killian, and yet she could hardly commit the absurdity of showing apprehension when his wife had remained quite unruffled. Jane, with a convalescent's appetite, cheerfully applied herself to boiled mutton and spinach; but when Miss Bailey had bashfully asked to be excused, the girl bluntly came out:



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"How is it at Laurelton, really, Killian? Safe as you say?"

"I don't like to worry Violet," he confessed. "At first there may be some trouble. Nothing of any real consequence. Then, if the strike isn't settled at once, there comes a long stretch of quiet. And that's what I wanted to speak to you about. Won't you come, then,—all three of you,—later in the summer, to pay us a visit?"

"Not I, thank you." Romola was fiercely ungracious. "I'm growing altogether too sociable, and this summer must be given to hard work, off by myself somewhere."

"Thank you," said Marian, gently; "but after being away all winter, I must stay at Halstead."

Killian showed frank disappointment. "That's too bad. I counted on you, Marian. Laurelton is a dull place for Violet; but if she could have some people with her it would make a lot of difference. And, although I don't want our life there to seem in any way affected by the strike, it isn't every one I'd care to have this year. Indiscreet visitors might make trouble. Yet by midsummer

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I'm perfectly sure it will be safe. Safe enough to take Violet and the boy."

"I'll come," Jane put in.

"Good girl. And you, Marian; do think better of it," Killian pleaded.

Two distinct motives travelled across Marian's consciousness. That which she permitted herself to recognize was a bitter conviction that no better caustic could be laid to her wound than a daily contemplation of Killian and Violet. Behind this was the unacknowledged desire to serve him, to help him, to ease his difficulties, to be near in time of trouble. She had no qualms about her father. Mr. Genge's absences from home had become longer and more frequent. He was plausibly full of excuses, yet they were mysterious and unaccountable. Marian dreaded something untoward in the wind, but felt powerless to forestall an unspecified calamity.

"Better come," Jane urged.

Romola listened, taking no part. Marian at Laurelton seemed staking the whole of life on a single throw. With painful perceptiveness she read the girl's refusal, her

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hesitation, the mixed motives that now influenced her to answer, "Thank you, Killian. I'll come."

So the risk was to be taken. Either it will cure her, thought Romola, or—— Her eyes blinked at an inward vision as she recalled the gentle Marian suddenly grown dangerous. Marian striking a man in the eyes and ruthlessly turning the hose on a writhing crowd,—a Marian capable of going any lengths. In such a household conditions seemed ripe for tragedy, with Killian blind, stupid, unconscious of craving her society, yet longing for her sympathy; Violet utterly secure, and Jane whose code forbade her seeing anything but what was told her.

"You must be sure to ask Archie and Judge Borland for Sunday." Romola broke the silence. "Then your little circle will be quite complete." There was something so sinister in her tone that Jane looked up questioningly from a large grape-fruit.

But before any one could speak, Maggie rushed in, breathless. "Please, Mr. Orth, there's a man at the 'phone. He says a scab's been shot dead on Main Street, at Laurelton!"

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Instinctively the women turned startled eyes on Killian. He rose quickly, then stood frowning at the head of the table. "Hold the wire, Maggie." He spoke deliberately. "Whoever did that must hang for it." His voice was quiet; but if Violet had seen her husband's face she would never again have suspected him of undue softness.

## XIII

### The Millennium Wins

AS his train drew out of the station, the seat next to Killian was taken by Judge Borland, in an overcoat much too warm for mild spring weather. He carried a well-battered dress-suit case. The car seethed with country people homeward bound after a shopping bout in the city. Conscious little girls, in stiff, new shoes and highly ornate headgear, minced to the cooler for drinks of water, then, wet-mouthed and replete, bore overflowing tumblers to their respective relatives. Dreadful mishaps befel family parties of small children. Babies engulfed everything, from popcorn to mother's milk. The orange, the peppermint, and the banana vied with the odor of recently extinguished cigars, thriftily pocketed for future use by commercial travellers. These gentry eagerly discussed prices, the comparative merits of up-country hotels, and

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made fruitless efforts to ogle the ladies of a theatrical company, weary from one-night stands. A lean, flexible comedian and a white-faced, painted girl subsided into blissful flirtation. The older actresses fell promptly asleep in attitudes of utter exhaustion. A yellow-bearded man, in neat gray clothes, sat up, alert and busy, quite undisturbed by the crowded car, the chatter, the rampant vender of sweets and reading-matter.

"See that poor devil," the Judge muttered to Killian. "He's actually writing his plays on the road."

The man scribbled with intensity, paused, holding his pencil aloft, then, with swift forward duck of the head, as if plunging into a favoring tide, he dashed off a sentence or two.

Killian watched him interestedly. "All the pangs and joys of inspiration," he commented, with melancholy humor.

"He rewrites the 'Black Hand' for a travelling show, and has suffering thrills enough for Lear or Hamlet."

"It never does seem fair"—the Judge stuck to generalities, sharing Killian's reluctance to bringing up the subject with which both

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their minds were occupied—"that results may be so little commensurate with effort. But we have got to take the world as we find it."

The conversation of two girls sitting behind now obtruded upon them. "She says to me, 'But, Sadie, if your father goes out, hadn't you better stay here? Five dollars a week might make some difference, and you the only wage-earner.' I just says, 'I don't know how that may be.' Mrs. Johnson, she certainly is a real nice lady, and I'm sorry to leave, and her with a young baby and comp'ny coming. But when there's a strike on, mother always did want to have us round. I wouldn't wish to go without warning; but they sent me a telegraph to come right off, and home I go. Maria's quit her place, too. We always feel like we must be on hand when anything's doing."

Killian and the Judge exchanged pregnant glances. "Right enough, too," Sadie's friend chimed in. "You never can tell what you'll miss. Say, did you see a scab was shot up Laurelton way? A Hun or a Dago."

"Serve him right," rejoined the Irish-American. "It's bad enough, all them faw-



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reigners working there anyhow, without having them turn scab on us."

"I don't fancy them myself." The other girl was capable of liberal judgments. "Now and then one of them acts foolish, but the bulk is good at holding out. A beating or burning down a house or so keeps them steady. You see they are great ones for laying by; they've always enough in bank to last them awhile."

"That's true," Sadie confessed. "And they spend a queer lot on funerals, too. But they don't give to their church like we do. No Little Sisters coming round after them. I declare, my next place I'll have to ask six. What with pew rent and Sodality dues, and all, I have not a dollar saved."

"My efforts at civilizing Laurelton seem about as futile as those of our yellow-bearded friend over there." Killian spoke in low tones. "More so, even. His play fulfils its functions, and here are two decent-looking girls calmly accepting murder and arson without a shadow of misgiving."

"Miss West was right." Judge Borland was thoughtful. "It's war; nothing else."

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And if every living man of us could bring himself frankly to face it, there would be a better chance of justice being done all around."

"By the way, how do you happen to be here?" Killian suddenly asked.

"Heard the newsboys calling murder up at your place, tumbled a few things into this bag, and caught the train at a run."

"Going to Laurelton?" Killian's face lit up with appreciation.

"Not officially ; but a man who may have to decide upon cases of this kind should make some effort to study the conditions. I want to be present at the inquest and hear every bit of evidence."

Killian nodded approval. "You will put up with me?"

"No." The Judge shook his wise head. "And not dine with you, either, till it's over. I don't want to be mixed up beforehand with one side or the other."

"Probably you are right." Killian eyed his friend sympathetically. "You look pretty well."

The Judge laughed. "It will take more

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than your Laurelton Hotel to kill a man raised on country cooking."

"At least let me send you a bottle of Scotch. They sell nothing there, and Mrs. Chiver's fried steaks need some antidote."

"You forget I've sat on circuit." Judge Borland significantly tapped his bag.

"All out for Eastvale!" a brakeman bawled in the door.

The train had stopped with a jerk. The white-faced girl withdrew dingly, clinging fingers from the comedian's clasp, and with great elegance of gesture smoothed her pompadour with a jewelled side-comb. One family party disembarked, with many backward glances for abandoned packages, the eldest son, in rebellious mortification, carrying a doll. "Say, you take this and leave me have the baby," he remonstrated.

"Poor Irene, left home with measles, and you kicking at bringing her a present. Don't you worry; everybody would know you was a boy right enough by the fuss you make." The tired mother had incautiously raised her voice to a pitch that aroused the entire car to a personal and indignant interest.

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At the door her baby sneezed.

"Guess we're all in for it," a commercial traveller, fat, springy, and comic, announced to the company at large. "Measles is good and catching."

On the platform a brakeman was making those mysterious Delsarte motions which precede a train's getting under way. The word measles had pierced the play-writer's absorption, and he suddenly came to earth with an exclamation: "I believe we change here." With bonnet-pins in their mouths, plumed hats under their arms, grasping wraps, and only half awake, the unfortunate ladies of the Black Band Company stumbled along the aisle, the actors gallantly helping with bags and shawl-straps.

"I called the name loud enough," grumbled the brakeman, as they finally extricated themselves from the car.

"The blue-eyed peach with the curly dark hair wasn't half a bad looker," served the fat traveller. "Say, though, hadn't we better——?" He fished a large flask from some recess of his apparel. "Just to keep off infection."

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"Move across the aisle," Killian whispered to the Judge. "There are several empty seats now, and I want to consult you where no one can overhear us."

\* \* \* \* \*

At Laurelton the only symptom of disturbance was an abnormal sense of quiet. Streets were empty; no groups of men chatted about the post-office. Killian's great breaker loomed up unmolested in the dusk of a spring evening. In the evil-smelling hotel Judge Borland found no one willing to discuss general questions with an outsider or to give more than a highly conventionalized account of Toni Repetto's murder. Although anticipated for weeks, no definite strike order had gone out till late the night before. A few workmen, chiefly foreigners, had demurred, declaring themselves quite satisfied with conditions at Laurelton. Toni Repetto was particularly obnoxious, pleading an expected baby, debts incurred by importing a brother's family. The principles of co-operative force were thoroughly explained to him; notwithstanding which, at the usual hour, he obstinately started for the breaker. About

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ten o'clock in the morning he was found lying in the road, a bullet through his heart. No one saw him fall, no one had heard a shot. Mr. Chivers, the hotel-keeper, looked as if he knew more, or at least had formulated a theory ; but prudence kept his mouth tightly sealed.

"You see, Judge," he finally acknowledged, "I'm a poor man with a living to make, and it's no good me taking sides. I get letters every mail, saying that if I rent rooms to special coal and iron police or scab workmen brought in by the company, it will be dynamite or a shot from behind a tree. Of course, my business is boarders, and I don't refuse any that pays and acts decent ; but that's not the same as taking a hand at the inquest."

"It seems quiet enough." Judge Borland offered Mr. Chivers a good cigar.

"And why shouldn't it be, and everything going one way? After this not a man will talk about getting back to work. And as for whoever fired the shot, Repetto's friends know right enough who did it ; but they don't dare say a word. Some day, a couple of

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years from now, perhaps, there'll be a fellow found back in the woods with a knife in him, or a house will be burnt. That's how the Dagos settle things. If they testified at this trial, not one of the bunch could ever hold a pick again in the entire anthracite region, even if they got off with their lives."

"Inquest to-morrow?" asked the Judge.

"Yep. Three o'clock. He's laid out in his own house; but there's no goings on,—all as quiet as you please. Say, maybe you'd care to see this. A boy was handing them out to-day."

Putting on his glasses, the Judge attentively studied a small, dingy card. It bore a curious trade-mark, a date, the word Chicago, and a sentence ending, "Polski agitators, robotniczki y filadelfii."

"Notice of a mass meeting?" he asked.

Chivers nodded. "Over near the county town, eleven o'clock to-morrow. They mostly have 'em afternoons and evenings; but this is to keep things quiet till after the inquest. They put it on in a hurry. You see, them dates is written in, and the ink is fresh."



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"I suppose any one can attend that meeting?" the Judge asked.

"Well, it's on the open mountain-side. You can see their stand from the trolley. There'll be plenty going. Shouldn't care much to hear them myself. Always the same old thing."

In spite of this discouragement, on the following morning Judge Borland found his way to a bare rocky common, broken by occasional scrubby tufts of oak sprouting from half-dead stumps. A straggling line of cottages ran eastward towards Oakdale, a sizable county town, showing an array of hill-tops crowned by large churches. One of these bore the double gilded domes of the Holy Greek Church.

On the common a rough stand had been erected, and from its centre waved a huge American flag. By various foot-paths ant-like streams of people converged to this focus. There came cheerful Irish-American housewives ; parties of Italians, wearing Sunday suits of black with an indestructible picturesqueness ; square-shouldered, short-legged Huns, with small, light eyes ; women

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in shawls or gaudily stamped cotton head-covering, others wearing new hats of fashionable shape. Almost every citizeness carried one or more babies. The crowd thickened. A few men took their places on the platform. Four young Italians, drifting out of the mass, sat on the chilly ground playing with a pack of filthy cards. Jokes passed to and fro. A bell tinkled in the distance, and from a little frame school-house near the cottages swarms of children raced towards the crowd. They threaded their way in and out and over all obstacles, creating much disturbance, but causing no ill-temper.

Having temporarily abandoned his eternal frock-coat and high hat, the Judge presented an appearance not appreciably different from that of a powerfully built, strong-faced man who now stood up on the platform, knowingly placing himself so as to compose impressively with the flag. He spoke with perfect naturalness and the greatest geniality.

"Here we all are," he declaimed, "Americans, Irish-Americans, Eyetalian-Americans, Hungarians, Bohemians, Lithuanians, Poles ; all speaking different tongues, but not one

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of us but is good Americans, and stand here ready to die for *our* flag." He stopped and utilized a burst of applause to spit comfortably and exchange a quick word with one of his colleagues, a small-eyed, tall, thin man, with a long, red nose. "But," he went on, "my turn isn't yet. Brother Malatesta here will speak to the Eyetalian in their own lingo, and Brother Latny has a word for the Huns, then I'll just wind up with a few remarks."

The Italian, a pale, dark youth, with fine features and the eyes of a dreamer, spoke long and earnestly. His section of the audience listened politely. The Judge guessed him to be beyond their depth, but at the end they applauded warmly and nodded approval. Throughout this speech and the impassioned oration of a bullet-headed, pale-eyed Hungarian, the Irish-Americans freely talked and joked among themselves.

"Who is the big man?" Judge Borland asked of a sociably inclined neighbor.

"Not know Dick O'Mahony! Well, you must be a stranger in these parts."

"That's right." On occasion the Judge had a full command of vernacular. "I come

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from the city," he explained. "We hear a lot down there, and read a great deal in the papers ; but it doesn't seem quite trustworthy, so I just came up to look around for myself. Now, the papers are talking of violence and the possible need of troops."

"Safest region on God's earth," the man affirmed. "You can see for yourself, and the most united. We are all fellow-citizens after our rights ; and you'll find more crime here at ordinary times, when people have money to spend in saloons."

A great hand-clapping now welcomed Dick O'Mahony, who rose to his feet, rubbed large fleshy hands together, and fairly beamed upon the whole assemblage. "Now, don't ; please don't. You're just going to be disappointed in me," he warned them. "This is no time for eloquence, with all your wives wanting you to go home to dinner." He stopped, and the crowd obediently laughed. "Now, you men, you think I'm going to tell you to be brave and lick every man in sight, and blow up the police ; and when they send their little soldiers up, to throw bricks and stones at them. Not a bit of it ! What I

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say is,—do what your missus tells you.” Much laughter. “She says, or my name’s not Dick O’Mahony, and I think you all know it’s that——”

“Sure, Dick, sure!” rose from many voices.

With a wide smile the orator went on: “She says, ‘Pat,’ or ‘Francis,’ or whatever she calls you, ‘keep off of the streets, keep out of the saloons, and keep quiet.’ There’s a little man at Wilkesbarra——” He stopped short, then shouted abruptly, with exaggerated brogue, “Can anny of yous tell me his name?”

“Johnny Mitch—Mitchell, John Mitchell!” went up in a roar from the crowd.

The speaker’s shrewd face lit with humor and sense of power. “I thought maybe you could.” His voice dropped to the quietest conversational tone, and he went on very quickly: “That little man is seeing to your rights. Trust him; don’t fail him; don’t spoil his fight by doing any fool tricks up here. If he’s telling them in Washington, ‘My people are the best, the most law-abiding citizens in the country,’ and the next day’s paper says a lot of drunken mine-

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workers rioted through Oakdale, how is your President, Theodore Roosevelt, going to believe him? You're in the hardest fight the world has ever seen. Just to be quiet for months and months while your wives and babies starve, and not to do one little thing. Of course,"—he suddenly frowned, his voice rang like a clarion,—“we'll have no scabs interfering.” A low, sinister growl rumbled from men's and women's throats. O'Mahony tossed back his head triumphantly, resuming the most genial inflections. “It's persuading them you must be, lads, and lasses, too,—particularly the lasses for that.” The laugh came as punctually as if an organ-stop had been pulled. “Persuasion's a fine thing. And then, next autumn, when that joker, Jack Frost, is putting in his early work, and the whole country gets to blowing its nose because there's no coal for fires, *then* you'll have your reward. People in the cities, people in the valleys, on the far sea-coast, the mountains, proud people, who never consider you, wearing out your lives down under the earth for their comfort, people who think you no better than slaves, will suddenly know that

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you are their masters. You are going to be masters of this broad country. What you say will *go*. Remember the French Revolution, with their heads on pikes and their bodies tramped under foot. Not,"—he suddenly grew very quiet and reasonable,—“not that we are going to have anything like that. This is just a little peaceful difficulty about a few holes in the ground in the anthracite coal-fields of the good old Keystone State.” He took off his hat with exaggerated reverence, clapped it on again, folded his arms, and glared from under lowering brow. “And about the ownership of *one hundred and fifty thousand souls and bodies of men*. Whether they own themselves, as God intended, or whether on every man’s neck is the heel of a coal baron, a bloated capitalist. And now,” with his broadest smile, “go home to those good Pennsylvania housewives’ dinners.”

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The Judge strolled thoughtfully towards his trolley. “Poor old Killian,” he reflected. “He offers about two seventy-five a day, and they promise the millennium. It’s not hard to guess who wins.”



## XIV

### The Edge of the Glacier

ALL day long Laurelton brooded in quiet. A few people arrived by train and trolley,—a consequential coroner with fine command of language, a pasty young clerk, and a nervous chief and posse of one shame-faced man.

“Some guards will come late in the afternoon, Mr. Orth,” the coroner explained, “in case there is any prisoner to be convoyed to Oakdale.”

Witnesses were summoned, all of whom bade fair to be loquacious and misleading. The two-thirty trolley brought a thin, middle-aged priest of inscrutable expression and a comely little lady in deep widow's weeds. She spoke with the heavy burr and flat vowels of the Middle West and appeared to be a pleasantly inexperienced newspaper reporter. Her obvious sympathy for the “poor man's wife” was natural in a woman and a stranger,

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and she easily secured a comfortable seat in the crowded room where Repetto lay decently covered with a coarse sheet.

"Who's that lady?" Dick O'Mahony asked, in penetrating whispers, as he shoved himself past Killian into the crowded little room.

"From the Philadelphia *News*," the coroner explained.

Dick did not look pleased, but offered no outspoken objection. Mrs. Repetto, stunned and sullen, stood with a small child in her arms. Killian recognized it as the skinny baby, now a bright-eyed, wiry little creature, soon to be ousted from its position of youngest in the family. The sheriff had corralled all witnesses in the yard. The journalist made ready to take notes. The coroner and his clerk fumbled over envelopes of papers. Dr. Knowles's deposition came first. Toni Repetto met his death from a shot which had pierced the heart, immediately extinguishing life. The bullet had been extracted. It was passed from hand to hand,—a Smith and Wesson, No. 4.

"Before this goes any farther, I have an

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announcement to make." Killian stood up and spoke emphatically. "There has not been time to print notices, but they will be posted to-morrow. I offer one thousand dollars reward to any one who gives reliable information as to the perpetrator of this outrage. To be paid in cash as soon as the information is proved correct. Coroner, will you kindly have that announced to the witnesses outside?"

The first person called was Mary Coyle, a shy girl of fourteen, who needed much reassuring before she could be induced to speak in audible tones. She then affirmed that she had been late for school. Owing to a bad toothache, she had lain awake all night ; consequently, her mother had not called her until nine o'clock. She lived at the north end of Main Street ; the school-house lay the length of the village away. No one at all was in sight,—children being at school and men in-doors or off gathering fuel in the mountains. In the middle of the road she saw some one lying. It turned out to be a man. He was on his back, and looked "queer." Supposing him drunk and in dan-

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ger of being run over if the butcher's cart should swing rapidly round the corner, she drew close, meaning to find who it was, and send a member of his family to see to him. Coming still nearer, she saw that he was dead.

"How did you know he was dead?" the coroner queried, with meaningless sharpness.

"From the look of his eyes and mouth. Then there was a wet stain on the front of his shirt."

Much frightened, she had hurried to school and told "Miss Jennie," her school-mistress, who promptly sent her with a line to the company's office.

Witness after witness was then called, but the story showed no deviation. No one had heard the shot, there was simply no evidence. The man had been alive, now he was dead. That was all!

Killian's old enemy, Mrs. O'Brian, was brought in, only because of her firm grasp on local affairs.

"Sure, your honor," she protested to the coroner, "some childer has got hold of a pistol and fired a shot, playing like. Many a

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little one would do that without knowing, and then hide the weepion. Sure, no grown body would be so senseless as to kill the man who was willing to be a traitor to his kind. They would let him go on, just to show how well he could run the Laurelton breaker alone, alone!"

During this speech Mrs. Repetto had roused herself to listen with deep attention. She now looked appealingly at Killian, who promptly went to her side. "That woman's son, Jack, in de yard. He knows something," she whispered, cautiously.

On Killian's quietly telling the clerk to produce Jack O'Brian, a pale, untidy youth was ushered in. He looked confidently about him with a clever, shifty eye, and stood much at ease, with hands thrust deep in pockets.

Suddenly, Mrs. Repetto's cowed silence gave way to a reckless explosion of fury. With a fierce exclamation, she sprang upon him, clutching at his throat with her brown, strong hands. The coroner seized her and pulled her off, but she strained towards O'Brian, not demanding vengeance from

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officials, but passionately longing herself to shed his blood. "Him kill Toni! him! him!" she shrieked.

"Don't you loose her on me,"—O'Brian settled his shirtless collar and spoke with easy assurance,—"or you will have to sit on my corpse, too. It's a pity when the law can't protect a peaceful witness from violence," he added, looking impudently at Killian.

"His pocket! see! see!" she raged.

"Just for form, you know, John." The coroner spoke conciliatingly, thrusting a hand into O'Brian's trousers pocket. "Lord! what's this!" He slowly produced a nickel-plated revolver, bran new. For a minute the room was filled with tense silence. Killian and Judge Borland quickly blocked the door, two officials stood in front of the solitary window.

Spent and overcome, Mrs. Repetto threw herself upon Toni's covered body. The abandoned baby set up a whimpering, at which the strange lady picked it up and comforted it with much tactful knowledge.

"Certainly! that's my pistol," said Jack O'Brian; "but if I just killed a man, would

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I be walking around with the thing in my pocket, and with plenty of holes in Laurelton to drop it down?"

"That's no evidence against a respectable young man," Mrs. O'Brian's shrill voice broke in; "and him not a mine-worker at all, but a barber down in Philadelphia."

"It's evidence enough for me to commit him for trial," put in the coroner, adding, resentfully, "and then maybe some of your memories will be a little longer than they have been here to-day. Close in, will you, sheriff? We'll lodge him in the school-house and mount guard till the escort comes over to help us."

The collection of people slowly dispersed. After a word with Killian, during which some money changed hands, the priest alone remained with Mrs. Repetto. Vowing vengeance on all who helped this miscarriage of justice, at Jack's urgent request, Mrs. O'Brian withdrew to her own cabin. Mrs. Robinson, the reporter, strolled off, chancing to fall in with Dick O'Mahony, whose way also led towards the trolley.

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"It isn't rightly up to me to do guard duty, but I guess you'll be glad of company," the coroner remarked to the sheriff, after John O'Brian, duly handcuffed, had been locked up in a small store-closet in the school-house. This closet had but one window, high up in the wall, too small for the passage of a man's body, but freely admitting light and air. When the prisoner was securely installed, it only remained for the sheriff to smoke a comfortable pipe in the deserted school-room, while the front and back doors of the building were intrusted to the coroner and his posse of one.

The coroner sat on the stoop, also smoking, and wishing for a crony with whom to discuss O'Brian's extraordinary folly. Presently his curiosity was aroused by the sight of Mrs. Robinson, picking her way at an old-fashioned feminine amble along the uneven sidewalk. Being almost as polite as a city policeman, as she drew near he dropped the front legs of his stool to the ground and pulled down his waistcoat.

"Please, Mr. Reed," she began, producing pencil and tablet with a pleasing air of dif-

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fidence, "could you give me your exact initials, and do you spell your name with an *e* or an *a*?"

"Double *e*, ma'am," he replied, nothing loath to have a tedious wait brightened by pleasant society. "James A. Reed."

The lady made a note. "It's so important to have things right: editors are dreadfully sharp," she sighed; "and, anyhow, your conduct of this case was so strikingly able that I'd hate to see some other Reed get the credit in print. Is that quite correct?" She held the paper towards him. Instead of his own name, he read: "For you only; don't read aloud; I'm afraid even to whisper, for fear of being overheard. I have found a most important piece of evidence. It's up the road, behind a house——"

"Let me correct one thing." Reed held out a stubby red hand to borrow her pencil, feeling proud of his tact at falling in so quickly with her game. He wrote: "Give me full particulars. It's money in your pocket."

She gave a cautious glance up and down the street. Half a block away a woman, dangling a luckless rooster head downward,

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stopped to gossip over the fence with a girl who intermittently hoed a scrubby garden-patch. There was not another human being in sight. "I'd have to show you myself." Mrs. Robinson spoke through closed lips.

"All right." Reed nodded. "After those chaps come, there'll be a half-hour between trains. I'll just stroll by the hotel, and you can join me."

Her face showed disappointment. "That won't do ; any minute may be too late."

The sheriff here appeared, having left his post at the back door within the school-house to supply a crying need. "Got a light, Jim?" he inquired.

"Sure." The coroner generously offered a strip of sulphur matches. "This lady——" he began, importantly.

"Yes," Mrs. Robinson cut in with an inconsequent feminine manner. "I came after your precise name and initials. They say it's only green reporters that bother about such things ; but I hope I'll never lose my wish to give credit where credit is due."

"Larkins, ma'am,—J. B. Larkins." Without in the least grasping this point of con-

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science, the sheriff felt vaguely gratified, and spat over the railing in the politest fashion before withdrawing to his post.

Mrs. Robinson cast an appealing glance at Reed. "No need for him knowing?" she queried.

"Sure, you're great! It seems you can teach me a thing or two," admired Reed, putting his statement strongly.

"The thing to do is"—the lady reached a decision—"to set Mr. Larkins at this door for a moment while you and I just step up the street. You could talk like you were showing me where they found him lying, and point around a bit. I'd walk far enough to let you see the exact spot I mean, and go on to the trolley. It wouldn't take a minute; it's the only safe way."

The coroner took out a knife and thoughtfully paired his thick white nails.

"Money means my sick boy's chance of life just now," Mrs. Robinson pleaded.

Reed snapped his knife to, and called across the threshold, "Mr. Larkins!"

The sheriff clattered out, his pistol ready for use.

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"Not a rescue-party this time." Reed waved a jocular hand at the lady. "Your man all right inside?"

"Pickin' his teeth as comfortable as ever you saw, and passin' in the good word to his prisoner."

Reed nodded his satisfaction. "Well, Mr. Larkins, suppose you stop here in my place a second or two, will you? This lady,"—a quick glance from the warm brown eyes changed the end of Mr. Reed's speech,— "Mrs. Robinson, wants me to show her something,—just a stone's throw up the road."

"There's no use our sharing Mr. Orth's generous reward with him, is there?" asked the lady, laying her plump hand confidentially on Reed's arm. "It's just a nice little sum for two, isn't it?" Here she blushed.

Reed pondered. "Divide, you say. Well, I don't exactly think the coroner would come in on that. I'm paid for this job anyway, you know, ma'am."

Mrs. Robinson thought it over. "This is a business talk, isn't it?" she asked.

"If you will put it there," he gallantly responded.

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"Well,"—she spoke with rather reckless frankness,—“the truth is I'm pressed for money,—pressed hard. Luck has thrown this my way, it's certain. Now, you can help me, spare me trouble and things that are hard for a woman to go through. It will be trying enough to testify against a fellow-creature, guilty as that man is.”

“Say, is it much farther?” Reed suddenly asked.

“No ; just up near that gulley, round the first corner. When I watched your admirable conduct of the case I made sure you were a man to see things done right. When I found what I found—— Oh !” she broke off in disgust, as they turned into a lane, half street, half common, where a dozen lads were playing base-ball. “Now, if that isn't too bad ! Think of them being just here, of all places ! If they see us looking over the fence into that yard, they will come, too ; every one of them.” She looked eagerly about her. “Nothing else to do. We must just wait.”

“Can't you show me, somehow?” Reed was growing uneasy.

“Not possibly. It might give the whole

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thing away. Besides, you never look at the danger. Men are so rash. They'd stone us, if they knew what we were up to. It scares me to think of it."

Reed stood shifting his feet and giving backward glances.

Mrs. Robinson's face showed the tranquillity of certain knowledge. "Say, you boy," she called, as an outlying fielder chased by after a ball, threw it to base, and stopped, panting, to stare at the coroner and his companion. "What time does the afternoon train get in?" She seemed to be studying the ground for a moment and hardly noticed his answer. "Aren't you kids going down to meet it?" she finally asked.

"Yep, sure!" Again he darted at a ball, threw it into base, straddled his legs apart in imitation of the best professional models, and watched the game, taking no further interest in the stranger's stupid questions.

"We can look then. It won't be long to wait," she whispered.

"Time for me to be getting back," Reed objected; "but I'll slip up for a moment as soon as the guards are here."



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On the school-house stoop Larkins was peacefully smoking. "Hard-luck story for Jack," the coroner observed, dispassionately.

"What gets me is his keeping it in his pocket." The sheriff possessed the art of being prosy, even in his elisions.

"Jack always was that much too smart for any job he undertook." Reed felt himself master of all subtleties.

"Guess I'll have a look inside." Larkins rose to his feet with infinite leisure and slouched through the doorway. "There's a whistle of the train," he called over his shoulder. "Don't seem we need guards any for this——" He broke off with so strange an exclamation that Reed hastily followed him through a narrow passage into the back room. Mr. Larkins's assistant lay in a tumbled heap on the floor, an unbleached roller towel over his face. There was a strong smell of chloroform, the closet door stood open, also the back door of the building. A heavy sand-bag was hanging over the back of a chair. The two men looked at each other in stupid dismay. Larkins slowly

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lifted the towel. "He's breathing all right." The sheriff was dazed.

"Mr. Reed!" It was Killian's voice from the stoop.

The coroner went out reluctantly. An alarm must be given, but he hated the moment of confession.

"Reed,"—Killian held a telegram,—“this has just come, in cipher: a warning that Mother Brown is on her way here, probably to incite a disturbance in case any one is committed for trial. It would have tremendous effect if they got their man off. It would encourage every kind of violence for months to come.”

"Yes, sir." Reed's voice was quite wooden.

"Well, we are all right now. There come the guards." Killian's tone expressed deep relief as he watched six blue-coated men with steel badges of office march briskly towards the school-house.

Reed, who had been standing on the threshold, now came out on the stoop. "I was thinking, Mr. Orth," he began, slowly, "they'd best search the scrub-oak patch, back

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of the house, first, I was just going to 'phone you. The fact is, O'Brian has broke jail."

\* \* \* \* \*

"No wonder they want to run our mines." Killian poured out the bitterness of his heart to the Judge as the two men sat gloomily over their cigars late that night. A fruitless hunt had revealed nothing. No one had seen the rescuers, no one had seen Jack O'Brian. A typewritten sheet of paper, stuck to the closet door with a dab of kindergarten paste, bore the legend, "WE SAVE OUR FRIENDS."

"The sheriff's man has concussion of the brain," Killian went on, grimly, "Tony Repetto is dead, and every man, woman, and child in the village looks at us with a grin, and rightly rates us as a set of duffers."

"People who play the game by the rules are always more or less handicapped," Judge Borland rejoined. "If you had shot O'Brian with his own pistol instead of waiting for the slow processes of justice——" He puffed big clouds of smoke.

"I should like"—Killian was deeply ruminating—"to chuck the whole thing and go in

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with them as a moderator. They've right enough on their side, if they didn't spoil it by violence and claiming impossibilities,—that all work has an equal value, and nonsense of that kind. But perhaps I don't understand them, and——”

“I think,” said the Judge, slowly, “that before taking any such step you had better have a little talk with Mrs. Orth.”

This pulled Killian up with a turn. “Yes; and of course she's perfectly right to object. A mine-owner can't in honor abandon his position now, any more than a man can change sides in the midst of a battle. But the trouble is that either way you look at it——”

“I think,” the Judge commented, “that in this struggle, like every other, it's best not to bother too much with the opposite point of view. It's war, and nothing but war. What you've got to do is just to put up a good fight.”

Killian stood, back to the fireplace, with feet planted well apart and head thrown back. His thick brown hair was tumbled, but though wrinkles of perplexity showed in

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his low forehead, his whole air was spirited and eager. He still felt the hopefulness and enthusiasm of a man who does not yet despair of finding the truth. The Judge, on the other hand, sat back at ease in a deep leather-covered arm-chair. While Killian struck match after match as his neglected cigar went out during each burst of talk, the older man punctuated all remarks with a careful and deliberate puff. "The way I see it all is this," he went on, slowly following an elusive train of thought: "they think that they are contending for something that never has been since the beginning of the world,—universal justice. That's the way they read the meaning of life. Now, I should like to believe in it, too, but there's nothing in nature that doesn't contradict it."

"How do you mean?" Killian asked.

"Why, they want to adjust the world on the premise that an equal chance is all men need to make them equal. While the fact is, that, in any family, children born under exactly similar conditions will vary from the word go. With precisely the same advantages, one will be capable in mind and body,

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while another starts out handicapped with an unserviceable brain or a weak digestion. Why, it holds good with a litter of puppies, where there's even less chance of variation, as prenatal influences are absolutely identical. Take another case,—the worst. Men and women. They are so created that their instincts and necessities don't properly tally. The highest good of one sex is not the highest good of the other. Where is the justice there? Yet it seems a universal law ; and whenever mankind sets its face against that——”

“Yes,” Killian admitted ; “but suppose the real law in this case, the true world force, is this new order of things which we are combating. Suppose we are trying to obstruct the great beneficial movement of some unseen glacier, just because it sends an inconvenient stream of water into our own back yards? The glacier is destructive, but also fructifying ; and, God knows, are our present conditions so satisfactory? We all deplore the state of politics, the non-existence of public conscience, the huge and terrible money power, the ability of one man to

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control the destinies of thousands. Good heavens! When I see that some fellow out in Chicago can swing a corner in meat or bread, can make millions in a few hours, I'm almost disposed to welcome any change, no matter how destructive. And a poor figure we should cut at the day of judgment,—men who were always clamoring reform! reform! and couldn't take the chance of getting it because our private interests would suffer, because it might make us and our children temporarily uncomfortable."

"There is just one thing," the Judge observed, with his wise smile. "If it is a world force, a glacial movement, we needn't worry about obstructing; it's inevitable. But if by chance it's a wave of impracticable folly, the good there is will make itself felt, and society will need all possible assistance in preserving a safe equilibrium."

"Meantime," said Killian, bitterly, "I claim to be able to manage my own mines better than could be done by the Union, and they outplay me at every turn of the game; take the very first trick while I've gone home to put on a clean shirt!"



## XV

### “Not Yet! Not Yet!”

**B**Y the middle of July, Judge Borland had fallen into the regular habit of spending Sunday afternoons at Halstead. Mr. Genge made him politely welcome, but the older men were utterly unequal to enduring each other's society, and soon made no pretence at further intercourse than a genial and perfunctory greeting. Mr. Genge enjoyed gossip chat of a decidedly frothy nature; the Judge's conversation was eminently substantial, and though an excellent listener, he infinitely preferred listening to Marian.

While considering Borland a “first-class old buffer,” Archie Leighton did not particularly relish his company on the afternoons which he proposed devoting to Marian Genge. The Judge, on his part, thoroughly liking Archie, would have been better pleased if some agreeable and profitable mission had demanded the young man's immediate pres-

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ence,—say, in Manchuria or Borneo. Nevertheless, when the two met at the door of Halstead, on a warm Sunday afternoon, they spoke cordially, much drawn to each other for the moment by a common misfortune.

“That d—d boy’s pony!” Archie nodded towards a smart hackney hitched at a cedar post near by. “He might cover it. He usually stays all day. The flies set it half crazy.”

“He is a remarkably unpleasant lad,” the Judge agreed; adding, with a twinkle of humor, “and, then, he talks away above my head.”

“Shall we roast him a bit, sir?” Archie ventured, with rising spirits.

“Too hard on Miss Genge,” the Judge objected.

“Yes, you’re right; though why she stands him! For awhile he was always at Merton,”—Archie chuckled with retrospective amusement,—“but he wanted Violet to choose her plants out of Boccaccio, or some such book, and she insisted on copying Elizabeth’s German Garden; so he was disappointed, and took to coming here again.”

At this point the door was opened by

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Willy, bandannaed and smiling. "Yassir, missus is down yander, with Mr. Judd."

"Well, at least," Archie suggested, as the two allies strolled towards the garden, "we needn't speak to him or pay attention to anything he says."

The result of this attitude was to make Marian secretly plan to avoid such another occasion, even if she had to spend the following Sunday afternoon in bed. It was hard to decide which she found more trying,—the silence of Judge Borland and Archie Leighton, who, however friendly their relations, certainly had no intention of talking to each other while she was about, or the unbroken monologue of Oswald Eric, who had no intentions of any kind, but simply talked incessantly because he found pure joy in so doing. Although he greatly appreciated Marian as a listener, this increased audience merely stimulated him to fresh efforts. Having recently discovered the poems of Paul Verlaine, he kept a copy about his person, and constantly thirsted to read aloud favorite extracts. Marian was reaching the conclusion that, as Archie and the Judge failed to

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offer the slightest shadow of assistance, she was justified in punishing their obstinate mutism by removing all check from Mr. Judd. She had even decided to sit on the rusty garden bench and let them stand uncomfortably in front of her while Oswald held forth at any length, when a welcome sound of wheels made the whole party look towards the carriage drive.

"The Orths," said Archie, speaking for the first time in ten minutes. "I'll take their trap to the stable." And he hurried up the steep grassy slope, rejoiced that in the general shuffling up caused by this arrival he might find a chance to take possession of Marian. With daintily uplifted skirts, Violet started for the garden. "Down, dog, down! Don't jump on me!" she hastily exclaimed, as Nimrod, gently tramping with his forefeet and waving a friendly tail, stepped across the grass to meet her. The orbit of his wagging perceptibly decreased when she passed him without further notice, and the old dog's head drooped in disappointment as he walked slowly and stiffly towards the house. Nimrod's memory was slightly fail-

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ing, but rather than neglect an acquaintance he sometimes offered greetings to utter strangers. It seldom happened that any one so misinterpreted his politeness as to take him for an unmannerly jumping puppy.

The trio in the garden had witnessed this little scene in silence. "We are here to pin you down for a date for coming to Laurelton," Violet announced, as she joined them. "Killian says it's perfectly quiet there now, and we're going up on Wednesday. Jane's coming the following Monday. You and she could travel together; and, mind you, stay at least a month——"

"Oh, as to that." Marian smiled. "A month!"

"Yes; why not? Your father is away half the time. I really think it's hardly proper for you to be here so much alone." Violet's matronhood spoke in every tone. "They say Laurelton is cool. It certainly is stifling here." If she wears tight silk dresses at midsummer, thought Marian. "Of course, I'm sorry to leave on account of the golf club," Mrs. Orth went on. "They're going to increase the membership, and I should

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like to be present to vote on every addition."

"Why not let them all in?" asked Archie, who had joined the group. "It's a decent neighborhood."

"It's all very well for a person who has no children to feel that way," she exclaimed; "but I have to think about little Killian's associations."

"Does he caddy yet?" Archie teased.

Violet went on unruffled. "How absurd you are,—as if he would ever caddy! and he's not four months old, anyhow. But I have to think of the future. There will be dances and all kinds of things at the club,—it will be a sort of centre; and if we begin by letting everybody come, in a little while we shan't have any control at all. It's always so much easier to face things at the very beginning; and I do not want my son ever to be knocking around with common girls."

"How are the flowers, Mrs. Orth?" Mr. Judd here cut in. He had somewhat lost interest in Violet when she failed to respond to his suggestion of the beauty of the garden composed of recondite and bloomless

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herbs, but it behooved him still to show her every civility.

Her answer was cordial. "They are perfectly lovely. You ought to see my rockets. Elizabeth, you know," she explained. "They're a mass of flowers. I wonder you haven't planted them here, Marian,—they don't need much care."

"There are some, just by you." Marian could not resist this. "We have always had them."

"Oh, those! Well, do you know, I did not recognize them." Violet was completely unabashed. "I must have been thinking of marigolds, or was it—no, they are over. It can't be columbines. I do get them a little mixed sometimes," she confessed. "So many new flowers at once. I never paid much attention to these things before I was married."

"You knew a lot about roses and orchids, though," Marian said, with flattering emphasis, in amends for a sarcasm which had utterly escaped Violet.

"I always used to like American beauties best," Mrs. Orth continued, quite without



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regret ; "but now I think more of palms and ferns that look well in the house, or else things that actually grow in my own garden."

"Are you reading as hard as ever?" Marian felt that conversation had reached that pass when new topics must be introduced by brute force.

"Yes," Violet cheerfully responded ; "science books, so that I'll be able to direct his very first observations. Nature study can't begin too early. Then, I mean him to have a little flower-bed of his own and put in everything himself. There is no better way of teaching a child thoroughly to understand the doctrine of the Trinity and the Resurrection. It's a simple object-lesson,—the seed, the germination, and the plant, you know."

Judge Borland listened to this in sardonic amazement ; he even ventured a glance at Marian,—a distress signal. Were they to waste a whole summer afternoon listening to such appalling nonsense. Killian and Archie in undertones discussed the likelihood of troops being called out in the coal-fields. Archie, belonging to a crack organization, was eager for this. Killian believed nothing

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could be less advisable. Finding that Mrs. Orth played a lone hand in the game of conversation, Oswald Eric Judd had subsided on the rusty garden bench in a picturesque attitude, and with a slightly ostentatious absorption was solacing himself with the poems of Paul Verlaine.

"The baby is quite well, I hope?" To save her life, Marian could not divest her manner of a certain formality in addressing Violet.

"He looks the picture of health and gains the right amount every week. We weigh him on Sunday mornings." Violet's immediate interests were too vivid for her to be much alive to atmospheric conditions ; moreover, she would never have thought so ill of people as to imagine that sensible conversation could bore them. "But to-day I found him asleep with both thumbs inside his fists."

"Inside?" Quite involuntarily the Judge closed his own large, strong hand and contemplated it questioningly.

Violet answered unflinchingly : "Rickets ! Two books say that is one of the earliest symptoms."

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"I think he's all right." Killian and Archie had joined the group. "He ought to be," the proud father declared; "Violet looks after him enough."

Marian indulged herself in one scrutinizing look at Killian's face. He was smiling quizzically, as is natural to a person discussing anything so humorous as a healthy baby; of impatience or irritation, of having enough of Violet, there was not even a trace.

"Well, it's really time for us to be going," that lively lady now exclaimed; "we only came to make sure of you. You will come with Jane, and we will meet you at the station."

"Maybe you'll see me there, too, Mrs. Orth," Archie put in. "I believe we may be called out yet, in spite of your husband."

"Listen to this!" Mr. Judd had been neglected as long as he could bear. Rising solemnly from his seat, he impressively declared,—

“‘Il faut m’aimer ! Je suis l’universelle Baiser,  
Je suis cette paupière et je suis cette lèvre  
Dont tu parles, ô cher malade, et cette fièvre  
Qui t’agite, c’est moi toujours ! Il faut oser——’”

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"Pretty thing," said Violet, perfunctorily.  
"It sounds like old French."

As they moved away from the garden Mr. Judd relented towards her sufficiently to enlighten this ignorance by an eloquent dissertation.

"And you would enjoy Baudelaire, too, Mrs. Orth. Do try Baudelaire. The *Fleurs de Mal*——"

Killian and the Judge paired off, speaking in serious undertones. Archie and Marian, walking slowly, brought up the rear.

"What a fool to read poetry to you, Marian!" Archie spoke abruptly, in a low voice. "You are all the poetry in the world, just you, yourself, and the sweetness of life, too, my dear, my dear! I must not bother you; but don't ever for a minute—please don't—ever forget!" He broke off as abruptly. Marian gave him a sidelong glance out of her melancholy hazel eyes. The young man was actually white and trembling. It came vaguely over her that this handsome, manly creature was really suffering,—suffering from a pain which she herself knew too well. After all, if he

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wished it, why not? What better fate could life hold in store for her? Reading something of yielding in her considering expression, the young man drew nearer. His color mounted in a hot wave; his eyes, usually discreet, showed ardent lights. She moved more quickly towards the house.

“Not yet! Not yet!” Marian’s heart was beating uncomfortably and her breath came overquick.

“All right; whatever you say.” Archie had himself well in hand again. “I can wait a year,—just so long as you haven’t forgotten.”

## XVI

### For Once Jane Winces

**G**RANTED a strike and August at Laurelton, nothing could have been more satisfactory to Violet than the adjustment of people and occupations which evolved itself in the course of a peaceful fortnight. First and foremost, Killian Junior increased mightily in size and beauty. His wrinkles had filled out and splotchy redness gave way to delicious pink cheeks; the neutral-tinted eyes now showed, brown and melting, from under long, straight lashes, and a thatch of thick, brown hair was fast replacing baby baldness. His moods alternated between heavenly content with life and vigorous remonstrance at the interval between meals.

“Fancy my having a child that isn’t blond!” his mother remarked, with placid surprise, as she displayed him in triumph to Marian on the morning after her arrival.

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"Well," Jane protested, "what did you expect? Killian is dark enough, isn't he?"

"Of course,"—Violet never detected a snub,—“but our family are so fair; and it always seems more natural for a baby to take after its mother.”

"How sweet and fresh he is!" put in Marian, pacifically. "He looks like a bunch of apple-blossoms."

"And isn't he immense!" Violet went straight on. "He is not five months old yet, and he wears a ten-months' slip. Romola declares," she added, conscientiously, "that in shops all sizes are marked big, so as to gratify mothers. But I really think he is unusually large for his age. The babies about here aren't half so heavy. I've seen a lot of them,—Killian wanted me to."

This she had done without remonstrance, but without enthusiasm; and as to carrying out her husband's plans for the welfare of various families, Violet did not consider it common sense to furnish munitions of war to vassals in open rebellion. At first Killian had talked to her of the mine-workers and their Union, of the fine side in this struggle.



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He tried to make her sympathize with his doubts, with his dread that, after all, he might be standing with the party who were, in truth, obstructing a legitimate onward movement of the world. Still believing the men to be wrong, terribly and dangerously wrong, he was yet assailed by misgivings and forced by innate sense of justice to respect their mistaken point of view, no matter how little he might approve of their methods. Since Toni Repetto's murder there had been no further disturbance. Killian's placard offering a reward for news of Jack O'Brian hung unheeded in the post-office. It is not difficult for a man to hide in a region where for twenty people hunting there are a hundred thousand glad to cover his escape.

"You must confess," Killian urged upon his wife, "that there is something marvelously noble in our not finding one person to turn informer. There is my offer,—they see it every day, people who can't buy butcher's meat, whose children need shoes,—a thousand dollars, to be had without effort or trouble; and if I were to make it ten thou-

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sand there would not be one soul to claim it."

"I think it quite natural for every one to stand by his own class," Violet replied, with intention ; "and I don't see what there is for us to do but stand by ours."

Nor was he more successful in attempts to make her see the larger bearings of the case. Like all people who are born knowing right from wrong, Violet had scant patience with a complex state of mind. Consequently it came about that when she had duly posted Killian as to his son's weight, appetite, cerebral and digestive processes, conversation between them rather languished. Without exactly seeing how it happened, Killian was dimly conscious of being side-tracked in every attempt to mitigate the severity of her judgment, and soon grew ready enough to fall back upon Marian Genge, whose sympathetic ear was ever open to any subject he might choose. The girl despised and condemned herself, tried to rally, and again came under the spell. She found it ridiculous, humiliating, farcical. But there it was. Killian really cared—he

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was in earnest. But to an intensely personal creature like Marian the needs of large bodies of human beings appealed but little. A poor woman, a sick child,—to help such she was capable of effort and sacrifice. But a hundred thousand men with picks, drills, and black faces interested her exactly as much as a hundred thousand red ants. Killian, however, neither had cause to suspect this nor to dream that the sound of his voice was enough for Marian Genge. She would have chosen that this voice should speak of far different things; but if he talked of coal-dust or drainage, of co-operative stores and the rights of labor or the obligations of capital, it was still Killian who talked, and she needs must listen. Violet, on the other hand, though genuinely attached to her husband, felt no particular craving for his society. Man and wife being indivisibly incorporated, she was no more capable of jealousy than of herself fancying another person. The best that she could offer had been given to him, and, such as it was, at least it had the merit of durability. Nevertheless, it was with a certain relief that

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she found a safety-valve for his conversation was willingly furnished by Marian Genge.

Then the governor issued a call for troops, the National Guard was mobilized, and by chance Archie Leighton found his company stationed not two miles below Laurelton, in a marshy, black-soiled valley, to protect the breaker of Colliery Number Ten. Violet's quick, superficial eye had easily detected the state of Archie's feelings towards Marian. Quite disinterestedly she approved. It was a good, suitable match ; and although the loss of an available bachelor is always a serious matter to a giver of dinners, Mrs. Orth decided to do everything in her power to further the young man's cause. This she sensibly judged could best be accomplished by giving him freest access to Marian ; consequently she again took up the burden of companionship with Killian, drawing him and Jane about her in the evenings when Archie was off duty, actually asking questions concerning the arrival of non-union workers, the disposition of troops, and such matters. Marian saw these manœuvres, powerless to resist. She faintly wondered if perchance Violet

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had been jealous; could she be whistling her husband to heel! No, it was not that. Mrs. Orth's imagination never played about the conjugal bond. To her, as to him, it was absolute, final. She was acting from pure benevolence. "And she is perfectly right," Marian inwardly confessed. "Marry I must. It's all I'm fit for. There is nothing else to do. But not yet,—not yet!" Meantime, Archie was gentle, forbearing, respected her reluctance, but, under all, felt yielding, and grew radiant.

"Dining in camp is really worth while, Violet," he announced one evening, as he reached the Orths. "It's good of you to let me come so often. I'm learning to appreciate the beauty of civilized food. And," he added, "do, please, excuse my coming so. But we're on duty later, and won't have time to change."

"I think the uniform becoming. Doesn't he look nice, Jane?" Violet sincerely admired Archie's trim and soldierly appearance, and was glad of his being displayed to such advantage before Marian. He was a lover any girl might be proud of, and she felt

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disinterested satisfaction in another woman's good fortune. It was just what ought to happen. Thoroughly understanding her drift, Jane approved him duly, without outward wincing. She was fully conscience of what Archie was to her ; but he belonged to Marian, and that settled the question.

"I can't think what keeps Killian ; he is usually in before this. Do you mind waiting, Mrs. Knowles ?" Violet asked of the doctor's wife, a plain, careworn woman, dining with her husband at the Orths.

"Where has he gone ?" put in the doctor, a bluff, spectacled man frequently finding occasion to wish Mrs. Orth and her enlightened nursery apparatus at the bottom of the mines.

"Just up the road, he said, to see about some barracks for the new laborers at Number Nine."

Dr. Knowles consulted his watch, and discovered that the clock was fast. Jane played solitaire vigorously. Archie and Marian talked in low tones. Violet and Mrs. Knowles bewailed the quality of Laurelton laundry work. "Suppose we don't wait any longer,"

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Violet suggested. "It is so hard to get people to do anything, that Mr. Orth may be kept till all hours."

The doctor asked leave to call up the office of Number Nine, and learned that Mr. Orth was still superintending the placing of cots in certain sheds. The laborers were expected in half an hour.

"I wish we had been ordered up there to meet them," Archie put in, as they sat down to table. "They said our going might start a row; but, upon my word, I don't see what else we're here for."

"That is just what Orth thinks," chuckled the doctor; adding, as Maggie left the room, "wouldn't say much before her,—they are all more or less in it."

"Really, I must apologize for Mr. Orth——" Violet began, to Mrs. Knowles.

"Oh, a doctor's wife, I'm used to irregular hours. Why, once when we had a formal dinner, my husband didn't come till——" The lady told a long story, her voice was a little abstracted, and no one exactly knew when she ceased speaking.

In spite of his boasted appetite, Archie



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showed small interest in Violet's excellent dinner. The whole company talked disjointedly, barely hearing one another, yet with an air of listening intently. Once, at an outcry in the road, both men promptly left the table. "It's nothing," Dr. Knowles announced, coming back to his place. "Children playing tag. Mr. Leighton will be right here. He stopped at the telephone."

Archie presently appeared, reporting all tranquil at Number Nine. Marian ventured to look neither right nor left. She felt that her face must betray her. The quiet, the touch of strain in every voice, in Violet's least of all, the sense of brooding trouble, the alertness underlying Dr. Knowles's indifferent manner, all of it was a nightmare too hideous to be endured.

"You'll find cigars in the library," Violet thoughtfully announced. "Mrs. Knowles, don't you want to see baby asleep?" The two matrons mounted the stairs, deep in congenial talk.

"Do you suppose it's all right?" Jane asked of Marian, as the two girls tried to fix their attention on a complicated solitaire.

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"I wish he were here." Marian spoke with effort. "Doesn't the king go there? Hearts, I mean."

"Yes, on the ace. I didn't see. Archie is afraid there will be trouble when the men come in. He put his horse in the stable without unsaddling, in case of their being called in a hurry." After vainly waiting for Marian to make some remark, Jane dealt out a few more rounds. "This lay is no good." She soberly collected the cards and began shuffling.

"They are at the telephone again!" Marian exclaimed.

"All right!" Dr. Knowles and Archie came in from their cigars. "The scabs are safely installed. Orth started for home about twenty minutes ago. He's due here now."

"Violet!" Scattering her cards in all directions, Jane rushed to the foot of the stairs and called, "He's all right. He'll be here, presently."

"Thank you, Jane." Her pink face glowing with a smile of happy absorption, Violet appeared, Mrs. Knowles following on her heels. "That really is a relief. I was be-

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ginning to be worried. But, Jane dear, don't speak quite so loud,—you might wake baby." Nevertheless, a few minutes later, when wheels sounded on the carriage drive, she went quickly to the door, and with a demonstrativeness quite unusual in Violet, threw herself affectionately into Killian's arms, turning up a round cheek to be kissed.

With sombre eyes Marian watched them. This was the worst of all. Killian's engagement, the wedding, the spectacle of their arid domesticity, even the sharp terror of the past hour had been as nothing compared to the physical torture of seeing—what? The natural manifestation of affection between two people whom she knew to be man and wife. In a minute Violet had exhausted her possibilities of emotion, and withdrew from Killian, urging him to come into the dining-room. He confessed to being hungry, and laughed at their fears. Every one buzzed about him, questioning, eager, chattering, as people do when suddenly released from anxiety. Aloof from the others, Marian stooped to gather up Jane's scattered cards.

"How foolish you all are," Killian remon-

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strated, as they hung about him ; "all but Marian, there. She is sensible enough to know that no harm would come to me. She is the only one of you who understands the situation and my people. Even Violet thinks we are living among a pack of wolves, and Archie is too bad. He is anxious to take a few pot shots at them." Although he had begun in jest, the ugly truth underlying his words brought a shadow across Killian's smiling face. "You know, Leighton," he went on, "when I see your little white tents sticking up out of the blackened valley, and realize what the sight of that must mean to every man, woman, and child in this region, I can only wonder that they are not taking pot shots at me ; but they don't."

"Indeed, I can't see what they've got to complain of," Mrs. Knowles spoke up, indignantly. "There are eleven parlor organs on one street in Laurelton."

"I believe if you were to give them a carriage and pair apiece, they would still strike for automobiles," Violet added.

"Very sensible, too, if they are able to get them !"

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As he said this, under Killian's jesting manner Marian clearly saw the weariness, the discouragement of a man fighting his fight alone, without sympathy, without understanding. How could his wife so endlessly oppose him? What did it matter which was his side? Right or wrong, it was still her privilege to be with him.

Violet paid no direct attention to this last perversity, but with thin lips and a certain dryness of utterance she bade Killian heed Maggie's summons to dinner.

"I've a plan," Killian announced, with a gayety which to Marian's ears covered some stern resolve. "Let us talk while I'm eating. Come along, Jane, you have good, practical ideas."

As the others followed him, Marian hung back, waiting alone in the deserted hall. Snatches of talk came in from the dining-room. A chilly breath of night air reminded her that the front door had been left open. Meditatively she turned and closed it. She also had a plan,—one which admitted of no delay. Though little inclined to self-analysis, or analysis of any kind, Marian possessed a

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brain capable of concrete thought. This was the problem before her. By every law of God and man, Killian belonged to Violet; and yet—— Here such an irrepressible wave of feeling swept over her that for a moment everything seemed possible. Her love should flash through every barrier. How could he fail to respond to such a passion as hers? How long could he live in this fool's paradise, feeding on husks, giving all, receiving nothing? In an instant the revulsion came. The very truth that she so loved in Killian would make him always true to his wife. True in act and also in feeling. She, Marian, was nothing,—a friend, a person to help him make his wife happy. Voices came from the room within. "I can only say, Killian——" It was Violet, speaking with uncontrollable exasperation. Somebody moved a chair. Archie broke in, saying good-night. He was coming out into the hall. Marian stood erect, very pale and tense. The time for carrying out her plan had arrived. Now, this second, she would commit herself, tie her own hands, bind herself in honor.

Archie was at her side. "Better go in

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there, Marian, and try to keep the peace. Orth has a scheme on hand for feeding the women and children,—and Violet—— Whew! I never saw her angry before. Little beast,” he remarked, dispassionately; “though all the logic’s on her side in this. I’ve been trying to keep things smooth. But it’s time to be off. We are to ride up to Number Nine to-night, and give a general look about.” He was gay and light at the possibility of a fight, of any adventure; pleased at riding forth into the dark night with a chance of being shot at.

“The Orths are bound to have it out sooner or later.” She emphasized her detachment from them and their affairs. “They disagree radically.” Archie looked at her in surprise. This attitude was new in Marian. “When things are to be done,” she went on, “it had best be over quickly.”

“Well, perhaps you are right. Anyhow, I must be off now. Good-night.” Archie felt vaguely disappointed.

“This minute? Must you go?” she faltered. “Don’t be foolish about exposing yourself; don’t be hurt, please—Archie!”



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She spoke in a low tone, without so much as looking over her shoulder at him ; but there was no mistaking her meaning.

“Marian !” One swift exclamation, and he held her in his arms. Then he kissed her.

“Don’t be late,” she murmured, quickly.

“Hard luck ; but you’re right.” Archie felt that even a fight lacked attraction at this minute.

When he had gone, Marian turned and confronted Jane standing in the doorway and watching her with a fixed, strange expression. A change had come over the frank young face,—a change which the older girl too well understood. Jane was suffering. Presently she spoke. “Excuse me, Marian, I didn’t mean to ; but I was here just now.” She came slowly across the hall. “I’m awfully glad,” she went on ; “it’s what I’ve always wanted.”

Still Marian kept silence. “And I’m robbing them of each other,” flashed through her head. “And that loyal child adores him ; while I, who don’t really want him, am taking him,—for what ? For ease, as a palliation, because I’m sore, unhappy, wanting warmth and love about me. That’s it. Robbing him

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of that which I must always withhold, while she is there to give it with lavish hand."

"You aren't put out with me?" Jane went on. "It was the merest chance."

"Angry at you, you darling!" Marian's arm was about her. She could feel Jane wince.

"Marian!" This came with an imploring rush. "Marian, you will be good to him?"

"You blessed child! Of course, I'm always nice to Archie. But, Jane——" Marian hesitated. "You are all wrong about him and me. It isn't what you think."

"But——" Jane gasped.

"Oh! That!" Marian achieved a sufficiently natural laugh. "When soldiers go off to the wars they always have to kiss somebody. If you had been here it would have been you," she ended, untruthfully.

"But you will?" Jane pleaded. "Marian, do. He wants it so!"

"Not now, or ever, ever, ever! Because——" No use in half measures, thought Marian. "Well, you see, dear, there is some one—I like better."

"Better than Archie?" For once Jane's guard was down.

## XVII

### Trumps are Led

“**D**EAR ARCHIE,—I can’t marry you. You have been tricked and experimented with. I didn’t see it till afterwards, but now I know. Truly, I don’t think it was money that tempted me. It was because you are so well worth a woman’s loving, if only I didn’t love somebody else. It’s hard to follow the twistings of thoughts purposely insincere, and I’ve been trying so hard not to see the truth that now the windings of my own mind are almost past unravelling. Honestly, I do believe that what tempted me was the comfort of being cared for,—as you care, Archie. Perhaps! But I can’t say. And then, last night, when you had gone, I knew it could not be. If you were to come to me now, if you were to kiss me again, as your lips touched mine I should think of him. Do you see? These aren’t possible things for a woman to tell a man, yet I must say

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them. It's an expiation you would be the last to demand; but it is due to you that I should have no reserves. Some women are so made that they can live without being loved; or, loving one man, the mere idea of another fills them with horror and disgust. These are good, normal women. I'm not like that. Romola always says that I'm a criminal, redeemed by taste. This is true. You are so pleasant to me that I could go off with you to-morrow, and in a way be happy. But the other man would always be in my thoughts, between you and me. If you put a ring on my hand, Archie, I could wear it gladly enough, but always wishing it were his. Suppose we two were alone in some foreign place, such as I've always longed to see. Suppose we had dined happily together, and then sat on a terrace overlooking a blue, mountain-encircled lake. You leave me for a minute, and I sit in a dream of hearing his footsteps come crunching along the gravel path, of having him with me, in your place. That would be my return for what you give. And that's not all. If he should ever change his mind, if he should

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want me, I can't say what would happen. I know it's not a risk to take. To-morrow I go home; but you must not follow me. After this letter I'd be ashamed to see your face——"

Having written so far, Marian paused. Could she ask him to forgive her? Could she give a hint of the future,—a hint which might point his thoughts, in due time, where she would have them turn? No; such phrases were only luxuries to solace her own feelings. They could bring no comfort to him. She must end without further words. As for herself, she had no plans beyond announcing to Violet, when the morning's mail should furnish an excuse, that something had happened requiring her immediate presence at Halstead.

The party assembled at breakfast in a mood of unusual constraint. Even Jane could not ignore the fact of something amiss between Killian and Violet. The letters were brought in and sorted. Marian saw one in her father's hand bearing the post-mark of a New England watering-place. She fingered the envelope meditatively, planning

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to quote from it some plausible reason for a hasty flight.

"I'm too sorry, Jane." Violet looked up from a half-read missive. "But mamma wants you to join her at Newport at once." She read aloud, in an unconcerned voice: "'Jane must come here now. She is turning into a perfect savage, and writes me the greatest trash about not caring to go out next winter. She seems to think that all people in society are tiresome and lazy, whereas I never saw any one take more trouble about things than they do here. Their interest in tennis and polo ought certainly to satisfy her craze for athletics. Besides, I do not think it good for her to be too much under the influence of a visionary person like dear Killian, especially since you write that he——'" Violet broke off. Killian said nothing, but Jane's cheeks flamed with indignation. Marian opened her father's letter. Violet went on politely, but with an extra touch of hardness in her clear voice: "Do you know, Marian, Mr. Orth is going to carry out a philanthropic plan which will consume so much of his time that it hardly

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seems worth while to stay here for the sake of keeping him company. It would only be a constant repetition of last evening's worry and anxiety. He thinks it wise to make some arrangement for feeding the strikers, and, of course, that won't leave him much leisure for being with his wife and family."

Killian was very grave. "I did not suppose that giving out a few rations to some women and children would make such a difference in my day's work, Violet. But if you would rather not stay here——"

"Rather not! As if any one in their senses would rather stay in a place like this. But, Marian, I do want you to come back with me to Merton. It will be lonely there. And then, Killian,"—Violet felt that she was showing the qualities of an outraged but forgiven angel,—"maybe by September you can take a holiday, and we can go off together for a week or so." Violet had no wish to do more than wisely discipline Killian by temporarily depriving him of her company and the baby's. He must simply be made to understand that she couldn't sit still and seem to approve such folly without entering a protest. "We



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can get ready to leave here in a couple of days, I think," she concluded.

During this scene Marian's eyes in embarrassment sought Mr. Genge's letter. She read with amazement. At least there was no longer need to invent excuses. "Why, thank you, Violet; but I must go at once—to-day—this afternoon." She held up the letter.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" Violet was quick to see her changed manner. "You look awfully white. What is it?"

"Nothing wrong!" Marian spoke in deep dismay. "No, not exactly that; but rather a surprise. My father writes——" She raised a glass of water to her lips,—to steady them, Jane thought. "He writes that he is being married to-day!"

"Married!" A wedding was always a source of satisfaction to Violet. "Who is it? Do you know her?"

Marian read: "'A Mrs. Laddson,—Mrs. Montgomery Laddson, from Rochester.'" "

"The millionaire widow? Why, she owns half the town." Violet always knew about people of consequence. "Where did Mr. Genge meet her? Did you suspect any-

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thing? All her children are married. Don't you think it rather nice, Marian?"

In truth, Marian hardly felt much enthusiasm for a change the possibility of which had never dawned upon her. She had thought of being sold out by the sheriff, of taking summer boarders, of marrying Archie. Perhaps it was "nicer" than any of these alternatives. At least it afforded her an immediate excuse for going home. She must at once make ready for Mr. Genge and his bride, since they proposed appearing at Halstead in the course of a few weeks. Though loath to have her go, Violet promptly recognized a practical necessity for the house being put into such trim as should duly impress a plutocratic lady, doubtless used to plumb-ing rivalling a jeweller's show-window, and other luxuries quite unknown to the old farm-house.

For the next few weeks Marian was completely involved in the toils of an exhaustive house-cleaning and whitewashing. New servants were installed and ineffectual attempts made to relegate Willy to the kitchen. While much pleased with the general stir, the old

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woman utterly refused to be restricted to her own province, and, in the matter of answering bells, continued to disconcert the newcomers invariably by thrusting a bandannaed head out of the front door on the rare occasions of visitors presenting themselves. This, indeed, happened seldom enough, as the neighborhood was empty,—even of Oswald Eric Judd, who had joined a colony of artists on Long Island. “I don’t paint much myself,” he wrote, “but chiefly absorb and give out. The students are mostly women, and I find a number of them beautifully receptive. They listen while I read.”

Letters from Jane described Newport in terms of high contempt. She had seen a lilac marble bath-tub daily surrounded with fresh orchids. She had been dragged to music parties, to dinners and breakfasts on steam-yachts. “And half the men have a sailing-master, and don’t handle their own boats. The polo,” she confessed, “is good ; but the women paint their faces and wear white lace dresses with diamonds in the morning. I can’t tell you how it makes me feel. Romola could ; but she isn’t here yet.”

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Archie also wrote just a line. "I understand," he said, "what you mean. After what you tell me, there is not a word to say. All the same, as long as you are not married to any one else, I don't exactly see the use of giving up. People sometimes do change their minds."

The girl thought of this long and painfully. Romola would be sure, she reflected, that Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos have decreed that Marian Genge may not live and die a spinster.

She also had a letter from the Judge.

September came in warm and lonely. The countryside was quite deserted. Violet had left Merton. After giving Marian much good advice, both as to the adjustment of relations with a step-mother and improvements at Halstead, she and the baby departed for Newport, where they were later joined by Killian. Mr. Genge and his bride were nearly due at home when Romola suddenly appeared. Business required her presence in town for a day; the night she spent with Marian. "I've been to Newport. They sent me to get illustrations for the very silliest story. Cousin

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Mary Dunham asked me to stay there. They've a great big house." Her manner clearly indicated revelations still to come. In a minute she began again: "So Violet and Killian had their first falling out."

"I hope it is all right." Marian had not looked for this.

Perching herself uncomfortably on a stiff piazza chair, Romola peered through half-closed eyes at the mill, the creamy, brownish waterfall and quiet stream gliding away under the boughs of overhanging trees. It was dusk, and autumnal insects filled the air with insistent voices. Herby autumnal smells drifted up from the garden, sweetened now and again by the poignant fragrance of late-blooming honeysuckle. "All right! Yes, it is,—but in the queerest way. Why such a deadly commonplace creature as Violet should always do the unexpected! But she does. I think she may even end by being in love with her husband. Of course, she always had a certain feeling towards him. She likes and takes good care of any possession."

"What has happened?" The deepening dusk enabled Marian to put this question.

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“Fight or no fight, Killian wouldn’t beat his people by starvation. He’s unfortunate in being able to see both sides, and that idea got on to his nerves. Every time he looked at his own fat baby he thought of thin babies down in the village. Then he instituted a regular system of rations. Violet almost quarrelled with him ; she had been so sure she could always control him. I think,”—Romola spoke with judicial deliberation,—“I think that he must have asserted himself pretty roundly ; and while it made her perfectly furious, at bottom she thought better of him for it. Then Powers and all those men made a fuss,—held him up as a traitor to his cause, and the other people claimed him as a convert and ally. He grew quite celebrated. Then he took a week off at Newport.”

“Was Violet still angry?” Marian asked, as Romola showed symptoms of lapsing into silence.

“Now, that’s where she is so amazing. Her mental, moral, and intellectual snobbishness produces situations that the wildest imagination couldn’t soar to. All sorts of

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people thronged to see Killian. He was much more important as a kind of crank than as one of a body of coal-operators. He had a regular following, poor soul!—newspaper men, beautifully dressed, theoretical socialists from Boston. Some such pretty women! A clique formed itself about him. The more Powers and those men sailed into him, the more of a martyr the others made of him. Violet suddenly awoke to the fact that her husband was really *chic*. She has begun to quote him again, just as she did when they were first engaged. She talks of studying Sloyd for a month, so as to be able to oversee a school in Laurelton. That's her present phase. Heaven knows what she will pass on to. I shouldn't be surprised if she had John Mitchell to dinner next."

"And Killian,"—Marian could not resist one more question,—“is he satisfied?”

"Satisfied!" Romola almost snorted. "Which is the fool's paradise? The seventh heaven? He's confirmed in thinking himself married to a live, human woman; and what's more, he is stupid enough never to find out the truth."



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A long pause followed this sally. Darkness settled about them as they talked in disjointed sentences, listening between whiles to the falling water and the nervous sounds of katydids and crickets. From a tall pine came the hoot of an owl, some small birds woke and fluttered about their nest. The owl's call then came from another quarter. Round and coppery, a great harvest-moon slowly appeared above the tree-tops, casting strange lights and stranger shadows on creek and garden. "Don't you ever play any more, Marian?" Romola suddenly asked.

"My piano makes a horrid noise now." It was long days since Marian could bear a note of music. Playing belonged to another time in her life,—a time before unhappiness pursued her like avenging fate. "The winter that I was away with Jane no one covered it, and the sounding-board has cracked."

"Maybe Mrs. Genge will bring a couple of new ones," Romola suggested.

"Maybe she will. Poor old Halstead!" Marian sighed. "They come to-morrow," she presently added, indifferently.

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"Killian will be at Merton for a few days next week," Romola presently offered. "When Violet comes back she'll give the bride and groom a dinner. Thank God, I'll be safely away before that." The two women separated for the night without further talk.

\* \* \* \* \*

Whether because of a series of golden autumnal days or from her state of conjugal satisfaction, the new Mrs. Genge expressed a rapturous appreciation of Halstead. From the old brass door-knocker to the kitchen without stationary tubs, she regarded the whole place as a well-got-up and highly entertaining curio. She was constantly making amusing discoveries. After learning that lavender and mint came fresh from the garden, and not through the medium of butcher or street fakir, she would not have been surprised at a home-grown dish of olives or dates. Alone the brick-floored porch did not meet with her approval, striking her as a culture for rheumatism, and Mr. Genge's well-shod feet soon rested on the most costly Apache blanket. Only Nimrod's gentle-

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manly discretion in the matter of gorging kept her from killing the old dog with masses of the most unsuitable viands, while Willy's sociable manners and hot biscuit met with complete approbation. She was kindly, good-tempered, not too vulgar; but, notwithstanding this, her company drove Marian to the verge of distraction. Tranquillity was an element in which the widow of Montgomery Laddson had never thriven, and with lavish energy she set about repairing broken hinges, rotten stable-floors, and planning additions to the quiet old house. Horses were to be bought and a new cottage built for a new coachman. Every day's express brought a fresh token of her wealth and good will,—frocks and jewels for Marian, marvellous cigars for Mr. Genge,—till the girl felt a deepened longing for by-gone times, when more than once her beguiling ways had been relied on to soften the heart of an importunate creditor.

Three days' rain brought out a thick crop of rank fall grass and freshened roads, dusty from a long drought. The newly wedded pair had taken advantage of a brisk, clear

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day to indulge in a long shopping-bout in town. Oppressed by idleness, Marian sauntered in the garden. Chrysanthemums were neatly blooming in well-tended beds. Tall cosmos, tied to green-painted wands, showed their ugly magenta flowers. Box edges had been trimmed, the boat near by on the river shone in a new coat of paint. She waited with a throbbing heart. Wheels on the carriage drive! A pair of well-bred bays. Surely not what she looked for. Killian came quickly down the slope, pulling off heavy driving-gloves and extending a cordial hand.

"Are you well, Marian?" he asked, affectionately. "You are rather white." He looked at her carefully. "Nothing wrong?"

"Nothing in the world. These cool changes, I think. They're trying. Nothing more."

"I'm glad." Again he hesitated, then went on, clumsily: "Leighton may have a few days' leave. Violet asked him to Merton for Sunday. She and the boy come home tomorrow."

"I fancy he can't get off." Marian's tone

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was a little more decided than she had intended.

"I'm sorry." Killian pressed the matter no further. "And Mrs. Genge?" he presently asked.

Marian smiled. "I think her nice,—good, sincere, and very kind. Not quite—not quite—you know. She finds Halstead '*ex-quizzite*,' and began by calling me 'Miss Marian,' and said rather arch things about 'young ladies.' The main point is, she seems genuinely attached to papa, and wants to please him. But, dear me! they are going to paint the old house inside and out."

"Then you will come to us anyhow while that's going on?" Killian did not see his way to offer much consolation about Mr. Genge's wife.

Marian shook her head. "No, thanks. I've other plans for the autumn."

"Violet will persuade you." Killian spoke with happy confidence. "By the way, I came for you to do me a favor. I am looking at a horse for her. A man in the village has it, and I want your advice. Can't you get your hat and come with me now?"

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Again she shook her head. "I seem to be very disobliging. It's too bad. I must stay here. Judge Borland is coming to see me this morning."

"Why, it's only eleven o'clock," Killian remonstrated. "He's never coming at this hour."

"Eleven!" Marian had not thought the time was so close. "Yes; he is almost due now."

Killian received this in silence. At last he began, hesitating, "Look here, Marian, you know that I don't often find fault with you. But I wish you wouldn't. He's too good a fellow."

"Too good for what?" Marian would not understand.

"Too good to be dangling at your apron-strings—any woman's. It isn't as if he were younger. It makes a man of his age and dignity look ridiculous; and, besides, it will really hurt him. I know Borland well. If he does this sort of thing, he's in earnest. You have no right to blind yourself to the possibility."

Marian broke off a spray of honeysuckle.

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"I supposed that he was in earnest when he wrote, asking me to marry him."

"It's reached such a point already! And you let him come after that?" Killian turned this over meditatively. "It's a great pity. He is going to feel it keenly. Such a disappointment will make a real difference in his life. Couldn't you truly have prevented this, Marian?"

"Possibly." Marian was indifferently sniffing the honeysuckle and wishing it had been any other flower. At this minute every deep feeling had gone from her. Her mind was only filled with regret that hereafter, all her life long, she needs must hate that pungent fragrance.

Killian grew indignant. "But, then, it's a shame. He's not a man to make sport of. You really are to blame. He's good, he's earnest."

"I may not be good,"—Marian was speaking flippantly,—"but, as for being in earnest, aren't you rather jumping at conclusions?"

"You don't mean——?" Killian broke down in amazement.

"I think"—she spoke with odd aloof-



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ness—"quite as well of Judge Borland as you do."

"But, Marian,"—Killian was quite unappeased,—“you can't really be in love with him."

"In love!" She spoke with uncharacteristic crispness. "As for that, there are so many other reasons. You are too romantic. All marriages"—she brought out the word roundly—"can't be like yours. Do you suppose, for instance, that my father is crazy about Mrs. Montgomery Laddson? Yet they will do very well together."

"But you, Marian,"—Killian could hardly find terms for his disapproval,—“you are born with a great gift of being able to care, able to make some one wonderfully happy; any one can feel it in you. Don't do this. The real thing will surely come to you. It is worth waiting for. Once you are touched with that, you will know the difference."

"That is all very well,"—her manner was wholly detached,—“but suppose it shouldn't fall out just so, and the time never comes, or the other person doesn't happen to——What shall I say? What guarantee has

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any woman of her feelings being returned? You don't seem to provide for such an emergency."

Killian looked at her, deeply puzzled. "I can hardly believe that likely for you. You've turned a good many heads already, Marian. Indeed,"—his indignation was rising,—“I can't help thinking you ought to have been able to care for some one before this. It isn't natural, such aloofness, unless you've coquetted and trifled till your hold on true feelings has been vitiated ; you——”

Strange impulses possessed Marian Genge. Her heart was beating so hard, so fast, that she almost expected Killian to hear it. Prudence, quiet, reserve, all had vanished. Since Fate had twice driven her to confession, she would put it into words a third time of her own instance, but with a difference. To the others she had been vague, indefinite. Killian should know more ; enough, perhaps, to——

“Killian,”—at first she spoke slowly,—“you are not kind, not charitable. What if I find my life as complex as you do—your mines. When a man loves a woman, he

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asks her, and she says 'yes,' or 'no;' he's had his chance and succeeded or failed. It's very simple. If he fails, he goes away, and avoids her, saving himself much pain and discomfort. With a woman it's quite different. She loves a man and he cares nothing for her. There she stays, crucified at every turn." She spoke quicker, with rising excitement. "Tortured, wrung with jealousy, bound hand and foot, unable to escape, unable to lift a finger to protect her agony, to ease her pain. You are wrong; you misjudge me. I'm not abnormally indifferent; I've not trifled away my feelings. Would to God I had! I'm only a stricken creature, turning in misery, seeking for any change. Nothing can be worse. It might be better, and so——" She drew a long breath, resuming, more quietly: "Then, for some reason, once you've been roused, startled out of your groove, you can't go back. You must go on, even if it be to worse things."

Killian was infinitely disturbed, distressed. "But, Marian dear, do trust me. You know how I've always cared for you, what good friends we have been. Let me help you.

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It may well be that the obstacles are less than you imagine. Perhaps together we may overcome them." He moved to the bench beside her, laying a kind hand on hers. "Courage, Marian. Happiness is worth fighting for."

Freeing herself from his touch, Marian stood facing him, her slender arms braced to her sides, with uplifted chin and blazing eyes,—eyes Killian had never seen before. "Courage!" she exclaimed, with passionate recklessness. "Obstacles! How little you see; how little you understand! Listen, Killian. There is just one obstacle, one bond under heaven that could hold me. He—do you understand?—the man doesn't care—that"—she tossed away the spray of honeysuckle—"for me, and never will. If for one second, ever, he should say, 'Come;' if it were from the ends of the earth, if it were to commit every wrong, every atrocity to myself, to innocent people, do you think I would stop? If he wanted me once, for an hour, no price would be too great, none. But—I've all but told him, and he never even knew it."

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There was a long silence. "Rather rough on Borland, isn't it?" he asked, ruthlessly.

Marian had sunk back on to the garden-seat. "No; he wants a wife." She was very gentle.

"And you a husband. So it's quite convenient." Killian turned towards her, frowning disapproval, but suddenly bethought himself of a mitigation. "Then, why not Archie? Surely, that would be more natural."

"Don't you understand why not?" Marian spoke with weary patience. "Archie has everything in the world to offer; every earthly thing a woman could covet."

"That hardly seems an objection." Killian's tone was critical. "If you are going to do this thing,—marry a man venally,—at least you might take one who is your fitting mate, Marian." His tone suddenly changed. "If it's money, for God's sake let me help you. It's too hideous."

For a minute Marian could not speak; her eyes no longer met his. "No, Killian; since my father's marriage we have plenty. It is that I'm a derelict, battering about, capable only of harm. I must be anchored. As for

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Archie,—when I'm safe out of the way, before long he will find consolation. With me he would have a poor bargain. Archie is fit to be dearly loved. He has a right to the best any woman can give,—something better than the liking, which is all I can ever have for him. You think it shocking for me to marry an old man. I think it base for a woman, not caring, to warm her cold heart with a love she can't return. Don't you suppose I know that life would be fuller, gayer with Archie? But it would be cheating him. A young man's best——" Marian was blushing. "I can't put it into words, don't you see? With the Judge it is different. He won't look for that. I admire him, respect him, like to be with him. He'd rather have a young wife than an old one. It's quite, quite fair."

Somewhere in the distance a clock struck the hour. There was a sound of horses' hoofs. Mr. Stites's flea-bitten gray turned in the gate.

Slowly the girl arose. "He's coming now. I'll go to meet him."

As she passed Killian, he stopped her, laying his hands on her shoulders. Very gently,

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very tenderly he pressed his lips to her forehead. "Good-bye, then, Marian."

"Good-bye, Killian." She spoke over her shoulder, moving from under the sheltering trees out into hard, autumnal sunlight.

Standing alone in the garden Killian thoughtfully watched her glide up the grassy slope. Mr. Stites's gray horse had stopped before the door. On the porch old Nimrod was waving a hospitable welcome. Killian turned his saddened eyes away while Marian Genge hastened towards the house.



## XVIII

### “Marian’s Married!”

“**T**HOSE boxes go to the storage company. No, not the screen; I’ve given that to Adela Mallard.” Perched on a step-ladder, Romola West savagely blinked at a scene of desolation. The gray light of a chill November day cast gloomy shadows on her dismantled studio. Rugs were rolled into bales, curtains had vanished, dust seemed to be invading floor and furniture. Jane, in short skirt and long blue pinafore, was competently tying up packages of sketches and photographs. “The men will be here presently for the heavy things,” Romola went on. “Are you warm enough, Jane? I think this stove would be better for more coal.” Jane replenished the fire in silence. “It is a year to-day since you were so ill.” Romola spoke in a tone of pure reminiscence.

“Don’t you hate breaking up the old place?” Jane asked. “I feel as if everything

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were over and we just had to put out the lights and go off into a dark night."

Romola blinked more crossly than ever. "For heaven's sake! don't you turn morbid and imaginative, Jane. Nothing in the world is over for you. You are just beginning."

"I wish you would let me go with you. A winter in Tangiers sounds a lot better than staying at home." Jane set down the last package, straightened her flexible young back, and stood facing Romola in a slightly boyish attitude.

"Mercy!" Romola exclaimed; "and the chief reason I'm going is to be rid of you."

Quite without offence, Jane awaited her next word.

Romola briskly descended from the ladder and began occupying herself with a pile of loose papers. "It wouldn't take many more months," she snapped out, her back squarely turned to Jane, "for me to depend on you as much as I used to on Marian. Then some awful thing would happen, and it would all be to do over again. I am growing a little old to stand such racking."

"Some awful thing!" Jane's voice was

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very sad. "You feel that way, too? I do. I can't help it. Particularly when she went off and got married without even letting any one suspect that she was engaged. Do you know, Romola, Marian once told me something; and then when she did this, I supposed it was all right. But somehow—somehow—I can't feel happy about her. I never talk Marian over with people any more than you do; but I wish you'd tell me what you think."

"What do I know about such things?" Romola scolded. "Am I the kind of sentimental person young ladies confide their love-affairs to?"

"Well," Jane persisted, "when you told us you were going, I thought, partly, it was because of Marian. I mean that you wanted to be off by yourself and get used to the idea."

Romola again turned her back. "Nonsense! What is that to me? I'm going because of the magazine stories. I'll come back the minute this wave of child-worship is over. As soon as you can tell an adult and an infant periodical apart by a glance at their

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contents I'll settle down to illustrations again. Oh, Boutet de Montvel has a great deal to answer for."

Jane tidily gathered up some bits of twine. "Everything seems ready." A note of disappointment lingered in her voice.

"The men will be here soon." Romola was still preternaturally cross. "Do you mind waiting alone till they come? Adela Mallard is going to stop for me. We have to sign a paper before a notary,—something she's to look after while I'm away. If you would just stay here."

Nodding acquiescence, Jane seated herself disconsolately on a packing box. Presently she made a discovery more disconcerting than any event of her entire past life. Romola West was crying! Jane walked over to the stove and busied herself piling on coal. Then she raked the fire noisily, not looking around, although she heard quick steps pattering to and fro on the bare floor. Finally she felt a hand laid on her shoulder. Pale, red-eyed, but quiet, Romola was holding out a rough charcoal drawing. "The first sketch for the Troubadour," she said. "Did

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you ever see such grace? We'll burn it."

"Yes," said Jane, gravely.

They watched it curl and blacken on the hot coals. "It's a kind of respectable suicide, a tragedy." Romola's voice trembled. "She had her reasons. I don't question them; there's nothing base in Marian. She will make him a good wife. She may even be moderately happy in time. But our Marian is gone. We shall never see her again; and we'll never see the creature she might have been. You are perfectly right. I'm fairly running away from the thought of her; but I hate you to have seen it. You are to be happy, Jane; and happy creatures never have such keen perceptions."

"Oh, that's all right. I'll do very well." Jane's own lips were tremulous. The two friends kept their eyes from meeting. There seemed nothing for either of them to say.

"Romola," Adela Mallard panted at the door, "may I come in?"

This broke the spell of Jane's silence. "Romola," she pleaded, "won't you really take me with you?"

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"Come in, Adela!" The little painter's voice was very gentle. "No, child," she whispered; "not for anything. There's work for you to do at home."

"Me!" exclaimed Jane, incredulous.

\* \* \* \* \*

The girl had not waited long alone when a knock at the door aroused her from such a spell of depression as her strong, normal temperament had never before experienced.

"Why, Jane!" It was Archie. He looked much agitated, hardly master of himself. "What is this Romola tells me,—that you are going with her for two years?"

"What does she say?" Jane was bewildered.

"That you are going with her. I met her just now in the street. She told me that you were here, if I wanted to say good-bye." Jane had never before seen Archie so excited. He apparently felt anxious, indignant, misused,—like a person whose rights were being infringed upon, whose possessions were not being properly respected. He was going on: "I suggested my coming along to Tangiers, or anywhere; but she

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wouldn't listen to it,—said men were a nuisance. So here I am. But, indeed, good-bye is the last thing I want to say"—his voice dropped into another key—"to you."

Entirely ignoring his unusual state of mind, Jane pondered over the problem of Romola, and finally offered: "Ten minutes ago she left this room, positively declaring she wouldn't take me."

Archie deliberately scrutinized her. "Is that why you have been crying?"

In any one else Jane would have deeply resented this intrusion upon her privacy. She merely nodded to Archie, phlegmatically observing, "A little down in the mouth. It's all over now. Rather dismal, people scattering and everything changing, don't you think?"

"But you are all right,—you are scattering," Archie objected. "You are going off for years. What on earth am I to do when you are gone?"

"Me?" Jane seemed to have no suggestions to offer. "Oh, you'll do very well. Anyhow, Romola is just as likely to change her mind back again."



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"Jane," Archie broke out, suddenly, "I don't think I'll take any chances. Move up a little, won't you?" He sat on the packing box, close beside her,—so close, in fact, that, unless one of them were to fall off, he needs must put an arm about her. Jane gave no sign of noticing this,—unless, indeed, a deeper pink which showed in her fresh young cheeks came rather from that than from the glowing fire.

Archie began, slowly, "You mayn't understand how it is, Jane, having known all about"—he found this difficult of utterance; but by Archie's code a man must shirk nothing—"all about Marian. Indeed, I don't understand very well myself; but just now, when Miss West said she was going to carry you off, I suddenly wanted to wring her neck. And when she said you were here, I came on a run; not with any plan,—there wasn't time to think. My only idea was to prevent your going,—to keep you with me, not to let you out of my sight. Do you see?" Jane made no answer. Her face was turned away till he could only catch the averted line of rosy cheek and a shadow of

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drooping lashes. "By the time I got here I knew just what I wanted." Archie's voice grew more assured, more masterful. "Look here, Jane. I'm not going back on the past. A man should never do that. Besides," he broke off, in rueful humor, "I was donkey enough to talk to you about it. And now, if you pay me out, it's no more than I deserve." As Jane took no advantage of an imploring pause, he was driven to ask, "Are you never going to speak again?"

"That was all right. I enjoyed it," Jane answered, in a very small voice.

"The deuce you did!" Archie took a turn about the studio, blankly inspecting empty frames, inverted canvases. "Look here, Jane." He resumed his seat beside her. "Life is good; it's meant to enjoy; it's meant for people to be happy. Now, I'm going to tell Miss Romola West that I need you a lot more than she can,—need you all day and every day,—and that you are going to stop here with me. Listen, Jane. We'll buy a farm and go off into the country, and never come near the town. But what's the use?" he broke off, disheart-

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ened. "You won't so much as say a word to me. You'd rather go with Romola." Again his arm was about her and, to make sure of her hearing, his face had come very near to hers. "You'd be bored to death. Say it right out. Even living in the country isn't a big enough bribe to make you put up with me."

"I expect I could stand you pretty well," said Jane, with her cheek still averted.

In the ensuing minute neither of the young people was conscious that Romola's pale face looked in for a second at the door behind them. Closing it softly, she vanished without a sound.

Before long, approaching footsteps on the stairs caused Jane to leave the packing box. Archie, eager to oblige all the world, hastened to open the door. In the passage without stood Romola, followed by two half-grown lads,—an Italian and a negro. They bore wicker trays, heaped high with bunches of violets. The perfume of violets wafted in, filling the studio with all-pervading sweetness. "Wait here, boys." Romola rummaged in an empty drawer. "Oh, now I've

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found it." She opened her purse. "Not enough! Do, Mr. Leighton, lend me some money. All that?" as he hastened to offer some crisp bills. "Well, it's not too much for you to give, considering; and don't ever expect to be paid."

"What are you going to do?" the young man asked. "Shan't we come, too?"

At this Romola turned upon them a face soft and alight with some unexpressed emotion. "No," she answered, very gently. "*We* had better just stop where *we* are. I don't need any help. I'm keeping an anniversary to-day, also doing penance."

"With violets?" Archie asked. "That sounds pleasant."

"Indeed, it's very laborious," Romola grumbled. "I have to distribute"—she waved Archie's money—"the worth of this in five-cent bunches to dirty little children, down in the Quarter."

"What crime have you been up to?" Archie was beaming. Jane said never a word.

"Oh, you needn't look so self-satisfied," Romola scolded. "You have blundered a

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lot. It's nothing but pure luck that you come out right in the end. But I must not blame you." She had grown perfectly serious; there was a note in her voice strangely hinting at reverence, at mysteries. "You're not the only one. My fault was worse. I doubted."

"Doubted?" Archie was grave enough, feeling unsounded depths beneath her perversity.

"Doubted of things essential." From Romola's tone she might have been owning to a deadly sin. "Denied that anything ever went right under the sun. But now I know better." Her solemn mood seemed abruptly to pass away. "Did you ever chance on 'Pippa Passes,' Jane?"

"Marian read me some of it last winter." The girl had at length found her voice.

"Well, you and Mr. Leighton may be able between you to think of the song I have in mind. Come along, boys."

Archie carefully closed the door behind her. "Do you know what she's talking about, Jane?" he asked, drawing closer.

"I suspect"—Jane was very shy—"Romola

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is thinking of this." She gave a long look at Archie, then spoke her lines softly, but with tender clearness. "I can't remember just how it begins, but it has a nice end :

" 'The hill-side is dew-pearled,  
The lark's on the wing,  
The snail's on the thorn.  
God's in His heaven.  
All's right with the world.' "

THE END





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